VENUS

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By

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Translated by

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To

My dear friends in Africa, in memory of their inestimable help which has enabled me to know and understand Oran, the noble land of pioneers.

VENUS

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PART ONE

I

WHEN the Princess Doriani, President of the Mediterranean Company, left the old "Merchants' Palace" by the door formerly used by the doges, ancient protectors of the city of Genoa—the gate to the sea—vociferous benedictions cascaded from the wharves, from the masts, from the warehouses and from the roof of the customs building. To escape further palaver she leaped into the launch which was to take her to her fleet. The day's program included a review of her ships and their crews. Beside her, on the velvet-covered bench, were seated Commandant Delmas, the company's director, and Commendatore Moselli, her general agent at Genoa: two intimate enemies whose bit-

ter rivalry was enjoying a short armistice, thanks to the royal presence.

Like a great rat, the launch slipped among the merchant craft, coasting boats, fishing-smacks and the enormous ships belonging to the Oriental lines; monsters of red and black iron, their hulls smeared with mud, their sails rolled up like long plumes. The roadstead held the august filth of a pagan altar after the sacrifice. The odor of the refuse which fed the sea caught at one's throat.

At the end of the harbor, the princess's yacht, the *Venus*, rested on the water like a bright jewel. Beatrice glanced fondly at the white hull. She was pleased to have the vessel bear the scandalous name which the world had given to herself—for she loved to defy opinion—and she was attached to her yacht as to an accomplice. On board they had seen her; the yacht's streamers climbed slowly the length of the mast and waved their emblazoned kerchiefs toward the sky in welcome. The launch came alongside the *Venus*. Captain Allegret awaited the president of the company at the top of the ladder.

"Shall we go ahead with the review now, Madame?" he asked.

"At once," replied Beatrice.

There was the usual tumult of bells, rumbling of chains, rushing of sailors, scolding of sirens and gushing of foam. Then the *Venus* drew away, so slowly that one had to watch the vessels anchored near to detect that she was moving at all.

"I have had the ships line up on the side of the new harbor toward la Lanterna," asserted Moselli, "and——"

"I should have considered the depth insufficient," interrupted Delmas.

"You would have considered poorly, my dear and respected friend," retorted the Italian with a venomous look.

The *Venus* maneuvered carefully through this difficult maze of the old trading port, for one never knows in such a case what is beneath one or what is happening behind. But Captain Allegret knew the harbor of Genoa inch by inch; he had his ship in hand and knew how to use that hand.

The port was busy again just as it had been before the three long weeks of idleness suffered by Genoa, this month of May, usually the liveliest season of the year. The minor employees on the wharves and on the harbor machinery had demanded a wage increase of three francs, which had resulted in a haughty refusal from the companies, exasperated obstinacy from the unions, and a general strike. First to act, Princess Doriani, President of the Mediterranean Company, had made the expected generous gesture. The other companies had followed her. Everywhere, this afternoon, men were working with enthusiasm.

The *Venus* moved toward the new pier, saluted by the staccato song of the hammers.

Just now the port resembled a warehouse for steel, a repository for sails; the masts and funnels of the vessels arose before the city as if to hide the old pirates' den, hooked to the mountainside, which surveyed the sea from the height of the Apennines.

The *Venus* had now approached the anchorage under construction for the Duke of Galliéra, where

rode the six vessels of the Mediterranean Company now at Genoa. The place chosen was at once the most spacious and the most intimate of the port. Engineers sped across it in their launches; cranes, restive black beasts, brought up from the bed of the sea monstrous steel oranges which, cleaving in the middle, belched out mud and stones into the avid jaws of the barges.

Cheers rang out. The triple-stacked giants saluted the small ship joyously, as old courtiers salute the child of a king.

"There are the *Sémillante,* the *Maddalena,* the *Vittorio,* the *Phocœa,*" enumerated Commendatore Moselli.

"I know, Monsieur, I know," interrupted Beatrice dryly.

In fact she did know. Her life had been marked by the baptism of boats, as that of another woman by the birth of children. Had she not been godmother for some of them in those moving consecrations of the sea where the champagne bottle replaces the cruet of holy oil? The *Sémillante* and the *Phocœa* were the creations of her own father,

Antoine de Varèze, of the ancient house of Varèze, ship-owners established at Marseilles for three centuries through the privilege of the king and the benevolence of a state which protects the rank of gentleman. The docks of la Seyne and of Penhoët had served as nurseries for these iron and steel monsters which had been raised by hammers' blows in the flames of the inferno, to be cast later upon the dark domain of the waters. How many times had the child Beatrice, her hair mingling its coppery threads with the white beard of her father, pored over the reports of equipment and the expense items of these pensioners of theirs whose framework alone cost millions of francs!

Beatrice's childhood had been surrounded by models, drawings, problems of smoothness and speed, specimens of sheet iron and of steel, plans of motors and of hulls, as the lives of other children are spent among dolls, lead soldiers and toy menageries. She could still hear her father's irascible voice:

"Those fools have given the *Sémillante* a hull like a razor blade, so that the wench rolls like the

janitor's daughter! As for the *Phocæa,* they have bungled her water pipes, and the passengers will have to wash themselves with their tongues. Damn these builders—all jackasses!"

Beatrice had heard the same remarks, put up with the same temper at Genoa, concerning the Italian vessels; when the *Maddalena* and the *Vittorio* came out of the dockyards at San Pier d' Arena her father had burst forth with an ogre's rage, while her husband had called to witness all the princely line of the Doriani, his eyes apoplectic.

Did she know the vessels in line announced by the commendatore! Why, they had shared her whole life, her life as a young girl and her life as a woman, for the latter had been only a continuation of the former with a few more experiences. There were four hundred kilometers of coast between her two existences; that was all. Ship-owner's daughter at Marseilles, ship-owner's wife at Genoa; like certain products she had only changed the label. By her marraige with Prince Ottorino Doriani she, Beatrice de Varèze, had unit-

ed the old Marseilles Company with the ancient Genoese Company under the single banner of the Mediterranean Company: the consummation of prolonged negotiations. She had often seen in her father's office, in a black frame, a parchment marked with the Doriani seal stating that the sum of eight sous would be paid for each measure of wheat discharged in the good city of Arles. It bore the date 1231, the year which witnessed the beginning of the relations between the two houses. Perceval Doriani, magistrate of Arles, had chosen from the twelve consuls of the city Seigneur Christian de Varèze to be his privy counselor, an appointment which did not prevent the downfall of the new republic. Perceval had then moved to Avignon with his retinue of slaves and Jewish money-changers. But the privateer was suffocated in the cities; for breathing space he needed the vast horizons of the sea. Provence saw no more of him; his son Angelo replaced him. Twelve years later, Angelo established a warehouse at Marseilles, buying and selling silver ingots, bales of wool, casks of oil and of wine, bundles of leather

and hides, horses, wheat, fish, sugar, fabrics, hemp and mustard seed. He called to his aid his father's friend, the former consul of Arles, Christian de Varèze, and the two equipped nine galleys for the king of France, with their destination the Holy Land. Such was the first business transacted between the Doriani and the Varèzes; Beatrice's marriage had been the last. But the two signers of this last agreement, her husband and her father, had both died and—dramatic coincidence—almost on the same day, one at Marseilles, the other at Genoa. Thus was explained the fortune and the power of Beatrice Doriani, President of the Mediterranean Company, one of the richest and most beautiful women in Europe.

II

Beatrice had not been surprised by the reception just given in her honor at the San Giorgio palace; it was much like all those at maritime clubs in New York, Shanghai, Rio or San Sebastian, where she had been fêted for years. But it was the first time that the walls of the old Merchants' Palace had welcomed a woman—a Frenchwoman in whose veins flowed not one drop of Genoese blood—to the honors reserved in other days for the doges. For it was here that in the past had sat only the most eminent lords of the republic: salt-administrators, fiscal agents, harbor commissioners and corporation syndics.

In the Hall of the Notaries, under the disdainful glances of its donors standing in their mural niches, she had stoically endured the orations which had celebrated her achievements as president of the Mediterranean Company. She knew how to listen; that was one of the secrets of her prestige, and then,

besides, she never could resist the sincerity of seamen. Those ships'-carpenters, repair men, pilots and longshoremen, with their rough faces baked by the hot sun on the wharves, looked on her as a madonna, and if they had dared would have approached to kiss her hands or the hem of her skirt.

However, she did not rank the reception of San Giorgio with this review of her own fleet which materialized her power. Now she felt a pride that warmed her heart under her white frock and made her, for the moment, forget all other triumphs.

It seemed to her at this hour that nothing could defeat her destiny, and she accepted it complacently, without the usual knocking on wood, so sure was she of herself and of others. The ships were expecting her. Their gleaming hulls eclipsed the *Venus* but they were physical, the *Venus*, the spirit; and the spirit dominates matter.

The cheers died out before the presence of the yacht and the woman who held so many human lives in her ringless hands, ringless because there were no rings rare enough for her. . . . Silence,

more striking than tumult . . . Beatrice, who was not susceptible to emotion—at least, so she claimed—felt her throat contract.

Forward on each ship stood the three chief officers, the captain and his mates, in full dress; behind them the entire crew were drawn up in elaborate order. Beatrice was impressed by all this magnificence; in her turn, she felt quite small. Slowly the *Venus* passed before the silent vessels where the officers and men, their hands to cap or beret, showed that courtesy on the sea, at least, was not dead. The *Maddalena*, the *Vittorio*, the *Phocœa*, the *Gladiator*, the *Perceval Doriani* . . . The *Sémillante* was last and seemed to ride alone. However, she was one of the family like the others. Perhaps she was ashamed to display but a curtailed and makeshift staff; only the two lieutenants were there executing their salutes with hesitant hands.

"What is wrong? Where is the captain?" asked Beatrice.

The two directors, the Italian and the Frenchman, for the first time seemed committed to the

same purpose. They consulted each other with significant glances.

"Captain Franqueville is on board, Madame," replied the director-general with some hesitation, "but we thought he should remain in his cabin."

"For the honor of the company, Princess," continued Commendatore Moselli, coming charitably to the help of his enemy.

Beatrice raised her eyebrows.

"Captain Franqueville," Delmas was forced to go on, "has failed in his duty. Through his brutality he has caused a man's death. If he had not been in the company's service for many years, I should have brought him before a disciplinary court here. He will be tried next week at Paris."

Beatrice's expression hardened. "No gossip in the company, no scandals!" she said. "You must show yourselves firm."

Life was soon to toss these words back to her; but who in this world has the gift of foresight?

Meanwhile a cloud had suddenly darkened the sky; the sea, abruptly robbed of the reflections which had enlivened it, was like somber oil-

cloth. Beatrice signaled Captain Allegret; the *Venus* put about.

"You will give the crews a holiday, Commandant," she said, sitting down wearily.

"They have been resting for a week, Princess," objected Delmas.

"We could put them on light duty and double the wine rations," suggested the commendatore.

"That's it, Moselli. I count on you. You attend to it."

One of the *Venus's* boats took them back to Genoa. Beatrice had imprudently bartered the comfort of her yacht for the austere palace of her aunt, the aged Princess Angela Doriani. She would have to pay for her day of glory.

III

INSTEAD of advertising itself, with a price of admission, between the Bianco and Rosso palaces on the Via Garibaldi, the street of the Baedekers and the Cooks, the Doriani palace was hidden in the heart of the ancient city on the old Piazza di Marini, with its back to the ruins of the church of Madelenetta, which God Himself had deserted to make room for the flocks of pigeons cherished by Genoese superstition. The Dowager Princess Doriani lived there in the midst of her people, who venerated her for her scornful vigor and her philanthropy. Every day she visited her poor, her bankers and her churches, frequenting only the establishments where a Doriani was an object of respect and prayer. The vesper hour found her in the Doriani chapel where the sword of the Doge Andrea gleamed above the dais, or perhaps in the church of San Lorenzo where the Apostle Saint John bore the features of her ancestor, the grand

master of the fleet of Francis I. In these holy places she had taken on the nonchalance of a proprietor.

The great roan family horse, hitched to the monumental box which served the princess as a carriage, was now waiting on the uneven pavement of the courtyard. Beatrice concluded from this that the old Princess Angela was at home. After struggling with the massive door, she found herself before the broad, black marble staircase and the silent lake of the patio above which wavered the will-o'-the-wisp of a medieval lamp. To greet her the porter stuck his drunken head through a skylight like a guillotine. Beatrice hoped for an instant that the head would fall to the floor and arouse this necropolis, but the fellow, adroit at balancing, tipped it in the other direction, into his vermuth. Did there exist, then, human beings who could vegetate in these mushroom cellars, rot in these caves? Better be a beggar in the street! Yes, anything rather than this. Beatrice mounted toward the apartment of her aunt, her heels tapping on the black marble steps.

Along a gallery the Doriani princes, cardinals, admirals, bankers and doges—Andrea Doriani was there in his ermine cloak, with his robe of cloth of gold, his conical Phrygian head-dress sparkling with gems—standing in the enclosure of their frames, surveyed the intruder. Over their heads, on the ceiling painted by Luca Cambosio, sailed galleys surrounded by sirens and tritons. A large old-fashioned salon opened on to the gallery, pompous and cold; one could imagine nothing less intimate or better suited to that imperious mummy clothed in black, perched on the edge of an armchair—Princess Angela. Ordinarily she might be taken for a withered school-teacher, but when occasion demanded she could uphold majestically the Doriani name. At the festival of Félice two agents of the insurance company watched over her emeralds, which were of inestimable value. She was a typical representative of the old Genoese society.

Near her stood a tall heavy man in pantaloons and slippers of white canvas. His forehead was hidden by a mop of silver hair, and two fierce black

eyes danced restlessly under his shaggy brows. The sculptor, Tedetti (see the prospectus in all the hotels of Genoa; Studio Andrea Podesta: marbles and monuments a specialty), was the chief purveyor for the Campo Santo. It is the custom in Genoa for a man, while living, to pose at home in the midst of his family for the monument which is to be the glory of his tomb. Tedetti hunted all the hideous pack of mortuary fauna, and the game nourished the hunter well, for the artist paraded through the palaces and graveyards a most comfortable embonpoint. He bowed very low, not without difficulty, to Beatrice whom he did not know.

"Beatrice, this is the illustrious sculptor, Tedetti, our modern Michelangelo. Your arrival is timely, my dear. Tedetti, show my niece what I've chosen," commanded the old princess.

The pantaloons and white shoes sped toward a green portfolio which looked like a miniature prairie on the divan. Beatrice watched uneasily while the genius undid the knots and then, with a smile of triumph, bared to the light of day Angela's masterpiece.

"This, Princess, is the monument which your venerable aunt has graciously suggested to me," exclaimed the illustrious Tedetti. He handed the design to Beatrice.

The inscription read: "Projected bas-relief for the Doriani family." Above, in a charcoal tempest, struggled a fishing bark ornamented with a triangular sail. Backed against the mast, and bristling with the beard of the period, stood Prince Perceval Doriani, ancient magistrate of Arles and Avignon, an impressive mariner; while behind, very much bored with being there, sat Ottorino Doriani, Beatrice's husband, in jacket and cap, slovenly and peevish, just as he had implacably displayed himself to Beatrice for eight years. On the prow hovered Hope, that is, the old Princess Angela in person, wearing the same rusty dress and hat that she had always worn. She was lyrically pointing out to the two passengers the way to Heaven.

Beatrice drew her coat about her beautiful figure with a gesture which revealed it plainly.

"It is magnificent," she said, "but if you don't

mind, Aunt, I shall not go aboard with you until the last possible moment."

The old aunt raised her head bruskly with a glance of distaste for this French impiety. Tedetti adjusted an eye-glass.

"The princess is too young, too beautiful, to understand," he said, smiling, while his yellow skin grew yellower.

"At any rate, you'll go with me to the Campo Santo, Beatrice," continued the dowager's dry voice; "I am anxious to show you the site."

Beatrice shrank from the suggestion.

"I'm very sorry, dear Aunt, but you know that I'm leaving for Paris to-morrow, very early."

"Very well. I shall be alone with our dead! However, you will have to take my place here some day just the same. You'll climb aboard like all the rest of us, Beatrice!"

An avenging finger warned the rebel. Beatrice countered with a provoking nod. Then, still smiling, she went to her own room. Even here the heavy memory of the dull years of her married life no longer assailed her, for she was following

to the letter the old precept: "Let the dead bury their dead." She lighted a cigarette. Over the satin chairs, of a tasteless rococo design, trailed multicolored dresses and shawls. A wardrobe trunk, stiff and shiny, was pushed against the mournful tapestry of the wall. Flowers with heady perfumes, portraits of men; Venus brought life to this refuge.

Beatrice felt better. She sat down and smiled at the two faces nearest, two faces that she had often seen very close indeed: two of her men, handsome Gonzalo Real and slim Bossel-Manneville. On their necks she had placed her small high heel and they did not trouble her. But, farther off, was a dry-point of Lord Wendley, tall and decorative in the naval uniform of his Britannic Majesty. He, greedy and headstrong like all his race, wanted too much. He had had the temerity to talk of marriage! Beatrice turned his face to the wall; this was neither the time nor the place, here in this ancient conjugal prison, to think of forging new chains.

"Ah! *Dieu*, liberty!" she sighed.

It was too late to run through the shops on the Via Degl' Orefici. She had dinner in her room, and decided, afterward, to go out without notifying the old Princess Angela; she was too bored to make herself agreeable.

"It's time I went away," she murmured.

It was always time for her to go away when she had spent twenty-four hours at the Doriani palace. While drinking her tea, which was terrible, she thought of her wasted evening. She might have called friends on the telephone, or gone back to the *Venus*, or dropped in on that pretty Countess Filippino who was giving a dance, or even yet she might spend the evening in a box at the theater; the aristocratic merrymakers at the Union Club awaited only a signal from her to follow. She had sacrificed this evening to the spirit of the family; in return they had offered her a bust on a funeral stone. Why not a place underneath, right away? And that after her glorious day, after her triumph . . .

She decided to go down into the old city, not because of a taste for the pleasures of the crowd,

but simply because she wanted to be alone. She was thinking: "I should like to see again the bare and beautiful Piazza Santa Croce."

After that her whim would guide her. Putting on her coat, Beatrice went out and quickly crossed the Piazza di Marini which, in the evening, reaches out toward the harbor like a faded ribbon. A gentle breeze brought into the dark streets the perfume of the sea. At one place under a street lamp Beatrice passed a stranger who turned abruptly and looked at her, as if he had been struck. She laughed, feeling more sure of her beauty than ever, since there was here no social frame to enhance it. At the Piazza Santa Croce, a man bowed to her. Recognizing George Monestin, chancellor at the French consulate, she stopped.

"Would you like to cancel your appointment, Monestin, my dear, and escort me through some of these ill-smelling streets?" she asked.

She had already enough of her solitude. Monestin dropped the hand which he had detained at his lips and exclaimed:

"Would I like it!"

They entered the older part of the city which was flooded with lights so glaring that at the back of the squalid courts cocks were crowing, thinking they announced the dawn. In the sidewalk shops people were drinking around enormous casks of wine. Out on the sidewalk sailors were sitting at tables with slipshod women who had burnished their hair with oil and had plastered too much rouge on their dark skins.

Before some of the door-steps bright-colored parrots squawked and prattled. Beatrice and her guide picked their way with difficulty among the babies, the musicians and the venders of lottery tickets. But no one paid them the least attention. The vagrants of the sea who prowled about this district had seen stranger things than two aristocrats escaped from the palace.

"Italy," said Beatrice, "is the only country in the world where people are never uncouth. Let's go in here. I haven't had dinner yet."

In the brilliantly lighted bakery shop, men were eating spaghetti. The fragrance of hot bread and coffee permeated the place. Monestin dropped

his monocle. Beatrice was really hungry; she ate spaghetti and forced her escort to follow suit. He had already dined too well, but was not equal to refusing anything of a princess. Courageously he swallowed macaroni drenched in olive-oil—he would have swallowed his gaiters for her sake. While he was paying the check Beatrice stood against the counter waiting, when suddenly she was caught by a sentence from a well-oiled gullet behind her.

"Your captain of the *Sémillante* is a bandit!"

The man was speaking French, and he was answered in the same language.

"That's just gossip of the grog-shop."

"Gossip of the grog-shop! *Madonna di Dio!* He killed a man on his last voyage, I tell you!"

"Well, then! What is the company waiting for? Why don't they stick him in prison?"

Beatrice gritted her teeth.

"Let's go," she said.

Instantly she was again the president of the Mediterranean Company, and she received as a personal insult the news that they already knew

in the city of the offense of one of her officers. She pushed through the crowd heedlessly. In spite of the freedom of her life, Beatrice, like all the Varèzes, had retained a strong sense of honor. There were certain things wherein she did not transgress, and she held inviolable the reputation of her company. She felt a sudden hatred for this captain of the *Sémillante* whose name she had already forgotten. The spaghetti-eater was right: why hadn't they punished the man? What influence did Delmas obey in retarding the trial a week? Beatrice had forgotten the unfortunate secretary who had almost lost his monocle trying to keep up with her. They returned to the Piazza di Marini in silence and at the quick pace of a patrol.

IV

Beatrice was back again in her Paris apartment in the Place des États-Unis, with the Eiffel Tower soaring above the gray roofs and under her windows Lafayette and Washington in their square of green turf. Three men had hastened to present themselves at the first sign of her open shutters. They were now here with her in her circular drawing-room. The light from the lamps squatting on the low tables filtered through a haze of cigarette smoke that rose like incense under the nose of stern old Christopher de Varèze, Grand Admiral of the Royal Fleet, plastered theatrically against the wall by Lebrun. The fragrant cloud wrapped in gray velvet the few rare pieces brought back from the Far East, and hovered over the depths of the English armchairs, tombs of all activity.

Beatrice was resting with her beautiful face in the shadow. Her glance caressed the three men with the pleasure of a proprietor at home-coming.

Long ago she had subjugated this Gonzalo Real, with his dark skin and his inquisitor's eyes, who had the right to remain covered before his king and whose indolence poorly concealed his ardor. This Bertrand de Manneville too, high strung like the thoroughbreds he spent his life in raising, de Manneville of the ingenuous sportsman's soul and chivalrous heart of old France, as witnessed his wounds and his palms of valor.

There remained to subdue only the third, Lord Wendley, unaccountable, disconcerting as an English sky. She sought in him, with an enthusiasm lately flagging, that completeness of mind and senses which she had not found in the two others. Daughter of a romantic father who could quote a thousand verses of Mistral without a mistake, she was tormented, like him, with a desire for the absolute. She pursued men, and always to her disappointment. That was the drama of her life, the reason for her many and international experiences, for the question of frontiers did not bind her, least of all in love.

In the depths of the roomiest armchair which he

had annexed as if by right, Lord Wendley smoked "caporal," a souvenir from the trenches of Picardy. His fifth cocktail in his steady hand, this russet bull in white spats smiled at the Spaniard and at the Frenchman with the indulgent disdain of his race and his bank balance. Did he not own half of Yorkshire and all one section of London? Beatrice regarded him fixedly, for the shaft of sharp unrest had entered her heart. Had she not already explored this man? They had exhausted so many subjects: jealousy, French injustice toward England and vice versa, the question of women,—he made fun of Englishwomen whom he admired without admitting it,—colonial politics, Latin lack of restraint. The restraint of Lord Wendley! She knew the play of his passions, which he held in check, but which were terrible, once aroused. But she wanted to believe in the surprises of this English sky: a black cloud suddenly hiding the sun, a rending flash in the black cloud, those uneasy skies which never weary one. Unaware of all these speculations, Wendley raised his handsome face and his glass toward the princess.

"Chin-chin, Beatrice!"

He was obviously assured—he was stuffed with assurance—that Beatrice had returned so speedily from Genoa only for him. She was all the more annoyed with him because it was true. To disconcert him, she threw herself on the low couch between Gonzalo Real and de Manneville. Wendley remained unmoved. But his calm proved to Beatrice that he was concerned (for she understood the inner reactions of men from the North). The Englishman, betraying his secret annoyance, began suddenly to talk on a subject which was belated and as irrelevant as if fallen from the moon.

"By the way, Pat Johnson—he's the secretary of the Union Club at Genoa—has written me that he kept track of you, Beatrice, and that you carried off down there a regular democratic victory. Were you setting up competition for Mussolini?"

"The Intelligence Service has discovered something," whispered Gonzalo Real to de Manneville behind Beatrice's back.

"The Service, yes, but as for the intelligence . . ."

Beatrice, who had heard them, fixed them with a severe glance. This was a calumny, for Wendley was not stupid. He spent only a small part of his time classifying the saucy décolletée women in Turkey's book at the embassy. He was an accomplished Hellenist and had conquered his laziness sufficiently to read French novels. And his ear was as fine as his mind. He turned toward Bertrand whom he admired for his courage, since he had seen him at Dieppe, although grievously wounded, leading a charge to the farthest objective.

"What is our jockey saying now?" he asked, leaving his armchair to sit on the floor at Beatrice's feet.

"Don't you remember, Bertrand," he continued, "that a horseman should speak only to his mount? In ordinary life we know that a cavalryman exists only by hearing his spurs jingle; he needs no other conversation. Moreover that is enough to set women's hearts a-flutter. You've noticed, Beatrice, that on the boots of Lafayette and Washington, cordially united under your windows, the sculptor hasn't forgotten to fix enormous spurs. He was

right; no man is victorious without spurs. Bertrand, why don't you wear yours? Don't you still belong to the universal cavalry?"

Beatrice, reconquered by this British sang-froid, slipped down beside Wendley. He handed her a cocktail. She smiled.

"Chin-chin, Ronald!"

Gonzalo Real got up suddenly; de Manneville's smile cut like a whip. Had Beatrice not been there, the three would gladly have turned the salon into a ring. Already the Eiffel Tower astride Rue Nitot was pressing against the window to count the rounds, but the martial tower, barbed with iron, did not understand the usages of society. And besides, Beatrice knew how to placate her "three dear friends," invariably guests on the *Venus*. She poured out a drink for them.

She knew them so well! On the Mediterranean, on the Atlantic, in the course of many cruises, she had seen them in all weather, in the most unexpected costumes, including the smartest of pajamas. The loneliness of the sea had delivered them to her without disguise. She knew their talents,

their faults, their strength and their weakness; her eyes had explored the depths of their souls; she had discovered plains of dreams, valleys of despair hidden under the calm surfaces of their faces. She knew that Bertrand de Manneville, poor and a gambler, had occasionally turned society jockey to fleece rich Jews and even people of his own class; that Gonzalo, a son of the Duke of Almeria, a sensualist hounded by scruples, was afraid of death; that Ronald Wendley carried a dubious nervous inheritance under his fresh skin and felt himself doomed to madness.

Beatrice was the only one who knew all this; also she could always find the words to appease their minds and bodies, and she had given them a taste for herself stronger than all their habits or vices. Away from her—Venus knew it—their lives were without savor or object; near her, they found again lost paths and renewed their enthusiasm. This enthusiasm, a while ago, had almost thrown them once more at one another's throats, but upon a gently suppliant gesture from Beatrice they had signed an armistice and now they were all

drinking together the draught of oblivion: two spoonfuls of curaçao, six drops of bitters, a glass of gin and two spoonfuls of syrup.

"Gonzalo," asked Beatrice, who did not like silences, "when does the season begin this year at Biarritz?"

"The king will be there July fifth."

Alphonso XIII, Gonzalo Real's friend, for a fortnight had hardly left the side of the Princess Doriani; Beatrice owed to Gonzalo one of the sweetest triumphs of her social career. She flattered the Spaniard by not forgetting it.

"Let's all four go. The *Venus* is waiting for us at Marseilles and I already miss the sunshine. We can go by Gibraltar, and you can see if the king's cannon are well oiled, Ronald."

They all approved. Bent toward her, as over a map, the three men were seeking in her eyes their itinerary, certain to follow the one she chose, when a servant entered, disturbing the group. An employee of the Mediterranean Company had brought the princess some urgent documents to sign.

"Tell him to come in," said Beatrice. Her ris-

ing to greet the messenger did not interrupt the conversation, for her companions did not take her business affairs seriously. They continued their discussion of the condition of the coasts with the violence of pilots. Beatrice, moreover, did not demand silence. It was her fault that she had been disturbed. She had been in Paris for a week and had not yet found time to appear at the company's offices.

The employee, an old man with grizzled hair, bowing with a respect which was not dissembled, held out his leather case, his report and his pen to Beatrice, with a serious, almost hostile air. He would have liked to drive out these three witnesses, deeming their presence offensive. From all his person, honest and frank, exuded a solemn dignity as if he were executing a very difficult order. His bearing created a slight constraint.

"What's it about?" asked Beatrice quickly.

The employee hesitated.

"I have brought Captain Franqueville's dismissal, Madame," he answered.

Two small gray eyes gleaming with a secret

hope were raised toward Beatrice. She pretended to see nothing.

"What, isn't the thing attended to yet?"

"The dismissal is not valid until after your signature is added to the official report, Madame."

There was uneasiness in his voice.

"But I can leave the report with you, if you like, if you wish to study it."

"It's not worth the trouble."

A secret anger had made Beatrice flush; she remembered the judgment of the two sailors in the back room of the Genoese bakery. To please the old man she might have pretended to glance through the report, but her cigarette was threatening to burn her fingers and she was in a hurry. So she signed the paper with an impatient hand, without reading any of it.

The messenger turned to go, his back bent, his pace suddenly slackened.

Beatrice slowly returned to her place. She was satisfied; although she had not for a single minute since the night in Genoa thought of the offending officer, she was glad to see the affair finally settled

without scandal to her company. All was well.

The project of the jaunt along the coasts of Spain and Morocco reclaimed them. Gonzalo Real, who had previously made the cruise with his friend and king, was recounting his experiences. Wendley had extraordinary knowledge of these places. He was a walking index of the ports, shoals, piers, beacons, moorings and buoys of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic; a formidable array of curves and figures. His post was Gibraltar, but he had not been stationed there very long.

Gonzalo and Bertrand contested his memory and his naval science a moment, but beaten by British tenacity, they abandoned the struggle. Seven o'clock struck; they recalled that they had important engagements and left, unhurriedly, after having asked a dozen times if Wendley were not coming with them.

Wendley did not even answer. He had moved to the window which he opened as if to air the room of his rivals. Following him, Beatrice closed the window again, smiling as she did so. This British impudence did not annoy her, but she con-

ceded nothing at all to it. She obliged Wendley to apologize.

"Don't forget," she said, "that I do not belong as yet to the Empire."

Now that they were alone, the Englishman dropped all pretense and revealed a face marked by anxiety.

"I received your letter from Genoa. Is it true, *chérie*, that you refuse me?"

Beatrice's eyes changed to a color which frightened him, for he was a sailor and knew the unfathomable depths.

"Don't say no, Beatrice, don't put that between us."

Beatrice placed her cheek against the hot cheek of the man she was torturing.

"Why marriage?"

He folded her yielding body against his.

"All the rest has an end, Beatrice."

"We shall do as we please!"

Their faces burned, one against the other. She said:

"Are you not happy this way?"

"No, I want to be sure of you."

"Sh—h!"

Half closing her eyes in order no longer to see the handsome, obstinate face above her, she pressed her lips on his.

In the street, in a furious downpour, the employee of the Mediterranean Company protected as best he could the black case which contained the dismissal of Captain Franqueville, countersigned by the Princess Doriani, President.

V

SINCE the flag on the Eiffel Tower, which she consulted by daily custom, was fluttering gaily toward the southeast—a sure sign of a fine day—Beatrice decided to proceed on foot to the company building. Having crossed the Champs Élysées, she entered Rue Royale. The sight of the flag of the Cook Agency, planted above five stories of offices, time-tables, guide-books, bank-notes and travel pictures, majestically dominating the Place de la Madeleine, by some strange trick brought to her memory a sally of her father.

"Thomas Cook would not be a British subject," Monsieur de Varèze had said to her one day, leaning heavily upon her—it was at the end of his life, his breath was short and while walking he sought the support of some one's shoulder—"if this grandfather of the agencies hadn't felt the need of favoring us with a flag. But it's not for us to complain about it. His place had the Durand restau-

rant where I used to bring your mother to get a sumptuous meal for a dozen francs; then we could travel all about Paris in a hack for thirty-five sous. Those were the good times, but times have changed."

It was not for him alone that times had changed. The quarter of the Opéra was to-day the haven of the universe, the port of the whole world. Along the Boulevard des Capucines, a veritable international thoroughfare, the Péninsulaire Orientale announced on a blackboard in letters of gold the days of its sailings for Burma, India, New Zealand. Behind their windows the Swiss railroad companies offered fresh camellias from Lugano; opposite, the plume of a Sahara palm tree shot up against an indigo sky, offset by a stretch of ocher desert. The Anglo-American *quai* in Rue Scribe was still more encumbered; in the show-windows of the Canadian National Railways, the Canadian Pacific, the White Star Line and the Cunard, model ships for pretty little rich boys displayed in tiers their hulls in tin and gaudy colors.

The Canadian National Railways had fastened

to one of its panels the haughty trophy of a moose-head; the Cunard had plundered its desks for photographs of distinguished passengers: ministers, female evangelists, radio musicians and stars from Hollywood; the Lloyd Sabaudo had resuscitated and displayed beside the *Empress of Scotland* (three decks, three funnels, twenty-five thousand tons), an old sailing vessel, the *Grande Hermine*, on which, explained the placard, Jacques Cartier had discovered the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. Before all these baubles passers-by were dreaming, transported by visions of travel and adventure. But the Princess Doriani did not stop. The Mediterranean Company included features as attractive and valuable as these, and did not need to entice pedestrians by show-window displays like a country fair.

Although she avowed herself ultra-modern on all occasions, in reality Beatrice was deeply shocked by this hawker's publicity. She preferred the French quarters in Rue Auber, where the old companies of Havre and Marseilles were established, clustered around the banner of the Trans-

atlantique which, from the top of a brass kiosk, summoned without clamor. In an unpretentious building stuffed tighter than a sailor's knapsack, their neighbor, the Mediterranean Company, housed with some difficulty its general offices, its bureaus for passengers and freight, its tourists' office, its administration and technical service, its bookkeeping department and its files. All of which had not prevented Monsieur de Varèze from renewing the lease in order to enrage his son-in-law whose taste for ostentation demanded at least a marble palace with a royal coat of arms.

The line of officials and the waxed parquets proved, better than all its parchments, the antiquity of the Franco-Genoese company which had started with Christian de Varèze, ex-consul of Arles, and Rodolpho Doriani, whose two profiles were joined on a bronze plaque fastened by four enormous gilded nails above the monumental fireplace in the reception-room.

It was also to spite his son-in-law, who had not made him a grandfather, that Monsieur de Varèze had stipulated that Beatrice should be named

president of the company at his death. This sensualist from Provence, in love with pleasure, had found in work the only hindrance to self-destruction. Is it possible he foresaw that his child would resemble him and that he planned to save her by the same means from the same perils?

He had not revealed the secret of this wish, and Prince Doriani, dying at almost the same time as his father-in-law, was spared the humiliation of seeing it realized.

The title of president, in spite of her father's intention, had been for Beatrice more honorary than real; at any rate it served the directors as a final authority: as the sort of *deus ex machina* which figures in the tragedies of Corneille. The name of the princess was the thunderbolt, almost divine, held regularly over the heads of recalcitrant subalterns or trouble-makers. It was very convenient. All this did not prevent the merciless dictatress from making sensational entrées like a prima donna at the old building. That she loved with her old Latin blood! Moreover, her subjects bedecked the president's office—the old office of

Monsieur de Varèze—like an artist's apartment. Whenever she planned to visit the company, without her knowledge her secretary, Mademoiselle Korn, or her chauffeur would telephone to Rue Auber apprizing the company of her impending arrival, and she was sure to find a bouquet of her favorite flowers on her desk.

The company formed a small court composed of men to whom Beatrice owed nothing and who owed her everything. They furnished her many opportunities to exert her fascination and she amused herself with them often, less haughty here than with people of her own class. More Varèze than Doriani!

Smiling, she ignored the porter with his livery and decorations and his elevator, to climb slowly the two flights which led to her office. She wanted to go past the Tourists' Office; this was her father's method: the eye of the master. Travelers were swarming about the bulletins. She smiled, and was entering the gallery which led to her office, when she perceived Serres, personnel director, an old cat, thin and yellow, with his liver murdered by hematosis

and scorched with cocktails, who never emerged from his private office.

"He who holds in his hands the destinies of a certain number of his fellow-beings," maintained Serres, "should meditate on their fate in silence and in retreat. If God committed the arrant folly of appearing to mortals, He would lose all His prestige; men would no longer believe in His divinity." And he would conclude coldly: "The Director of Personnel of the Mediterranean Company is a model in the likeness of God."

This morning, at the door of his cabinet, the descendant of the Creator was talking to a stranger who seemed unwilling to go in,—a man much taller than Serres, with a back apparently unused to stooping. While talking to him, the personnel director had the anxious look of a physician examining his patient. Serres was talking in a low voice, with a suppliant air, and although Beatrice did not see the other's face, she guessed that he was putting up an obstinate resistance to Serres' proposals. What impressed Beatrice was his head, which turned slowly like a gun in a turret to say

no, a no which was not to be disputed. He gave an impression of steel, which was confirmed by the strength of his frame, the disciplined rigidity of his whole body.

Serres, however, full of divine forbearance, continued his arguments. This man was certainly his friend, in spite of the plain difference in their ages, and Serres, evidently feeling that further words were useless, placed his hands tenderly, paternally on the broad shoulders as if to say: "Accept, do not be proud!" It was very touching, so touching that the stranger turned away to hide his emotion or his defeat. Then, Beatrice caught sight of his face, young and lined; the face of a seaman who leaned a little too much, on certain days, over the railing of the bridge. But, in its despair, the face kept so much dignity, so much incorruptible nobility, that Beatrice was ashamed to have remained there to listen. She passed quickly before the flunky who opened her door.

"What is that man doing here?" she thought. "He is not an employee. Is he an officer? But who?"

She suspected a drama; and she did not care for drama in her house. She felt a premonition of something unpleasant but, discarding it instinctively, looked around her.

The vase on her desk was too slender for its burden of roses, so she gave the order to have it changed. The cashier counted before her eyes with his India rubber fingers the file of bank-notes, all new—Beatrice would have no others—which she was going to use; she counted them after him. An employee brought a heavy album of samples of *toile de Jouy,* intended to decorate the first-class salon of the *Massilia,* the latest born of the company, ready to be clothed in the docks at Penhoët. Beatrice chose the fabrics. She trusted only her own taste, which was exquisite. She had a daring and refreshing sense for decoration, an artist's eye. The steamships of her company all bore the marks of the president. The fabrics seen, a secretary brought the mail. But her mood had changed; this time Beatrice made a curt gesture which caused the pair of silk stockings to retreat to the door.

"Call Monsieur Serres."

She sat in state in her armchair, waiting for some one to knock. She was not sure whether she was touched, irritated or merely indiscreet; she wanted to know the stranger's name. Suddenly she chuckled derisively at herself and cried out:

"Come in, come in!"

While all the other employees would come into Beatrice's office almost trembling, more afraid of this woman than of any man, Serres advanced with the supple and indifferent grace of an old cat on the edge of a roof. The Princess Doriani motioned him to an armchair where he might bury himself. This feline, ferocious in the jungle of men, had, beyond their reach, the humility of a bedside rug. He had always been led around by women. They had fascinated him in all colors: white, black, yellow, red.

Pursuing them, he had forged his destiny, in all latitudes, in all climates. His gallantries, like time bombs, had caused race wars, injurious to the company, wherever he went. While he was director of the agency at Shanghai, he had tried

to introduce into the white colony the lunar face and sun-robes of a Manchu princess; at Dakar, two breasts like pears and thirty-two pearly teeth had been the only dowry of one of his protégées, a dancer, blacker and shinier than the governor's dress pumps.

Serres, my friend, the tales of your mad affairs, happy recourse in the brush against the tyranny of the bamboo, heavenly relief from the boredom of the trading-posts, might eventually have jeopardized your safety in this world and the next. But Monsieur de Varèze loved adventures, and he installed you at the company headquarters to hear you tell about your own exploits. . . .

If Serres understood women badly, he understood men no better. This ignorance made him impartial; he was an excellent director. But the old cat would purr only at the knees of women.

"Please excuse me, Madame, for having made you wait," said Serres ceremoniously, "but a friend had come to say good-by."

"I saw you," said Beatrice. "With whom were you talking?"

"It was Captain Franqueville, Madame," replied Serres without embarrassment.

The old cat had stuck out his paw toward a forbidden plate. He watched; Beatrice did not flinch. Then he deliberately put his feet in the dish.

It was Franqueville's last day in Paris. He had come to say good-by. Though this visit to the company which had dismissed him might seem defiance and bravado, still Serres would not have had the courage to let a comrade depart without shaking his hand and offering—oh, personally, of course, and without success!—to help him. Franqueville was younger than he. Fifteen years before, when Serres belonged to the navigation personnel, he had received Franqueville as second mate on the *Regina,* whose master he was. At the first contact, the law of contrasts had operated. The "goat-skin full of alcohol" had united in friendship with the "diamond-pure conscience."

"I have always had indulgence for my own faults and scorn for those of others. Franqueville felt the need of atonement for himself and for others, of converting people to something better.

This preacher's son—I found out later—was, at heart, a puritan nourished on the Bible, and I, quite the contrary."

Beatrice's eyes could scarcely be seen now under the drawn lids. In this affair, because of which the company had severed relations with him, on whom was Franqueville trying to force atonement and why?

Suddenly the noise from the street, motors, horns, brakes in action, seemed to fill the room.

"I asked him," said Serres finally.

"And he answered you?"

"No."

At Shanghai he had seen coolies on the rack laugh and joke till the end, mocking the executioner; here, death was not at the end; the executioner, like all women, did not like executions.

"I do not know exactly of what crime Franqueville is accused, Madame, but he has not acted like a criminal; for me, there is no doubt of that. They tell me that he tried to defend a woman's honor; the spirit of chivalry is no longer in style. Franqueville is not in style either."

"Your friend seems to me an extreme man, Monsieur Serres, extreme and unmodern, lacking in the self-control necessary for a captain, the master of his ship."

Serres tried to smile.

"What would you expect, Madame," he said, "of a sailor who carries in his knapsack his knife, his tinder, his pipe and his conscience? And I am forgetting the Bible which lodges with the conscience. The bag was too heavy. Franqueville stumbled on the way. They pounced upon him like mad dogs. He has gone now to hide his disgrace in some forgotten corner."

Out of the depths of his friendship Serres had tried to speak with a voice no one could fail to believe, a sound which has become as rare to our ears as the melody of some celestial music. And Beatrice was a musician; the tones caught her more than the words. This Franqueville had arrested her attention completely a while ago in the corridor, the attention of the Princess Doriani, whom nothing impressed. For a quarter of an hour she had endured hearing a man defending a culprit

whose conviction she had signed with her own hand, and now her throat was contracting because this old scamp was playing the noble father sentimentally before her eyes.

She got up.

"Can I do anything for your friend?" she murmured.

The executioner was recoiling from the naked ax, but too late.

Serres' gaze gleamed with such irony that Beatrice, for the first time in her life, felt herself judged without wanting to laugh.

"Captain Franqueville no longer has his sailor's bag, Madame; but there remain his Bible and his conscience. With those a man like him doesn't need anything," he said softly.

He stretched himself as he got up from his armchair. The old cat had just skirted a gulf along his gutter; after a slow bow to the president, he recovered his air of indolence and his poise. He silently withdrew.

Beatrice sat down again at her desk and remained motionless for several minutes, her eyes

closed. On the screen of her brain new images were shifting about, making a dramatic composite. Then, forgetting that she had already rung, she began to pound the electric bell with tumultuous, jerky blows as if she were calling for help.

The princess asked for the papers in the case of Captain Franqueville.

VI

A LARGE envelope of official format. At the left, the word *Confidential,* written in blue pencil; across, in ink: *Official Report of the Court of Discipline, Captain Franqueville.* With one thrust of a miniature poniard, Princess Doriani split the envelope.

Monday, June 10, 1927, at ten A. M. before the Court of Discipline composed as follows: Monsieur Bernard, director-general, president;

Members: Messieurs Lardy, chief of transit, Bonneval, director of Tourist Service, Marolles, inspection chief, Berray, head of equipment, Courcelle, attaché of Administration, performing the duties of recording secretary, appeared Captain Pierre-François Franqueville, of the *Sémillante,* charged with homicide, committed in passage from Genoa to Buenos Aires, twelve miles from the port of Rio.

Résumé of the deposition of Captain Franqueville: "Having embarked four hundred forty-nine emigrants at Genoa, I personally supervised their installation, having been advised that some sailors were auctioning the best places with injustice toward the aged and the children. In

the course of a tour of inspection I saw on the deck reserved for the third-class passengers Constantin Zarkis, known to the Brazilian police as a dangerous white slave trader. Near him was his latest victim, a French girl who looked under age. Having decided to place Zarkis in the hands of the police at Rio and to proceed myself, if necessary, to have him arrested, I pointed out the couple to my officers. The steward on my order examined their passports and naturally found them all right.

"Under surveillance, Zarkis relinquished the French girl, but the report came to me that roaming about among the other women, he had succeeded in ensnaring two Italians, sisters, who were going to the Argentine to practise dress-making. With all possible discretion I had them warned of the danger to which their new association exposed them. Following this, they acted coldly toward Zarkis who became more reserved. Nothing to report of his conduct until April fifteenth. That day, in the evening, about nine o'clock, when some ten miles from Rio, the weather changed suddenly and our wireless station registered disturbing messages. I had the usual precautions taken and went out to verify the position my officers had taken. The sea was already sweeping the third-class deck. It was then that I met, together on the companionway which led to the upper decks, Zarkis and one of the Italian women. He was trying to embrace her.

"I intervened, and remarking to this individual that on no account could he have any business there, I suggested that he return to his cabin alone. The woman obeyed first, and Zarkis, sneering, followed her example. I believed the incident closed and went forward to make sure of the safety of the automobiles stowed near the windlass, when Zarkis emerged once more.

"This time, he assailed me with abuse; certain of his insults were not addressed to me personally, and as an officer of this company I could not endure them. Seizing the fellow by the collar to silence him, I saw that he was drunk. He drew his knife; I had to struggle a long time to make him drop it, but Constantin Zarkis having rushed at me a second time, his weapon drawn, I pushed him back with a blow from my fist. His forehead bumped against a windlass. When they picked him up, the doctor reported a fractured skull; Zarkis died without having regained consciousness. Upon our arrival at Rio, I drew up a report which I furnished on debarking to the Brazilian authorities, giving them at the same time a full oral explanation."

Urged to give information concerning the insults which were not addressed to him, Captain Franqueville formally refused. The Court after fifteen minutes' deliberation declared its decision. Discarding as unfounded any accusation of voluntary homicide, but declaring Captain Franqueville guilty of having lacked

self-control on duty, the Court has dismissed this officer from the staff of the Mediterranean Company. This penalty includes the suspension of all pension rights.

There was added a note from the director-general:

"At the recess of the Court, I asked Captain Franqueville to come into my office. In the name of our association as comrades, I begged him to throw some light on the insults (which he called shameful) of Constantin Zarkis. To whom were they addressed? I assured him that his confidence would be respected. Although my promise seemed to convince him, still Franqueville found it difficult to talk. Finally, after much hesitation, he told me that the insults of the white slave trader concerned the president of the Company. They concerned, he said, the name of a woman whom he had always been taught to respect; he had not been able to control himself. I observed to Captain Franqueville that the honor of Princess Doriani, quite unassailable, needed no one to defend it and that in the circumstance any regard for the insinuations of a man like Zarkis constituted a grave affront to our president. He told me that he was the only one who could judge what had taken place; that having obeyed his conscience,

he regretted nothing. This conversation has only strengthened my impression that Franqueville is a man full of pride, an enthusiast, anxious to dramatize himself. So I have not attempted to do anything to mitigate the decision taken against him by the Court.

"Bernard."

Beatrice snapped the document shut with a noise that resounded in the room like a slap in the face.

VII

Christopher de Varèze, valiantly posing in the middle of one of the panels in Beatrice's salon with the ribbon of the Holy Ghost about his neck and his hand placed jauntily on his hip, had belonged to one of the oldest brotherhoods in Arles, that of the Blue Penitents. In the processions he would march at the head of the shopkeepers, artizans and laborers, covered to his dark eyes with the cowl of his order. On the day of the Immaculate Conception this Grand Admiral of the Fleet would appear, his feet bare and a rope at his neck, approaching the Holy Table. He visited the churches. He accompanied the condemned to the rack, providing repose for their bodies with his money and rest for their souls with his prayers.

Each year he would go about to the inns, and with his head under the dark hood which no one ridiculed, he would murmur at each door the prayer: "For the poor prisoners I beg your alms!"

Beatrice's father would speak fervently of this ancestor.

"He took up contributions for the condemned," he would say, "because he was afraid that through some injustice an innocent person might have been sent to the galleys. That is proof of an upright conscience. The first quality of a chief is justice; if he perceives that he has been in error, he should admit it without shame and right the wrong at any price. Remember that, Beatrice!"

Her father's words had worn a secret path to Beatrice's heart. As in all the Varèzes, this desire for justice was present among the powerful instincts in her blood. She had shown that many times. However, irritated now by the unusual report she had just read, she passed before the grand admiral of the fleet without honoring him with a glance.

She was dining that evening with Wendley at Bellevue. Knowing that she would be an hour late, she became nervous. Beautiful enough to dress in a hurry and without assistance, she applied herself to the business; then, throwing herself into

her Voisin, gave orders for speed which would have made her insurance agent blanch. She left her car at the door of a Norman inn surrounded by automobiles. Tall and svelte, with her thin black draperies floating around her and without rings or necklace, Beatrice looked like a great dark moth under the cold sheen of the arc-lights. She walked to the garden which sloped gently toward the Seine. There she discerned under the single apple tree—the most precious tree in the place—the light of a solitary white shirt bosom and the gleam of a fresh ruddy face.

"Beatrice, at last!"

The voice was reproachful. Standing under the symbol of sin, Wendley did not seem happy. But once more Beatrice was the most beautiful woman in the place and England was triumphant. He smiled. Beatrice sat down and smiled too. Around them were other smiles, smiles in all degrees, for every one was looking at them; before this remarkable pair neither men nor women could remain indifferent—a sauce for their slightly monotonous association.

A big blond violinist from the orchestra sought their approval of his program, and they made their choice from his list of melodies.

Their account paid, Wendley had the Embassy's car brought up. They sped away in this gleaming coach, worthy of the richest in the Empire, and in the dark at last, Wendley clasped Beatrice to his heart like a new colony.

Jove! Why shouldn't this ruddy bull every evening undertake on his own score the kidnaping of Europe!

They returned to Beatrice's apartment.

"Now let's have an armistice," she said, smoothing his rusty hair with a light gesture.

She had several bottles brought.

"Amuse yourself with those and forget me a little while."

She threw herself on the divan, desiring only to dream and rest. Wendley did not answer, but filled a glass, then, having emptied it, came and stretched out beside Beatrice. Suddenly sentimental, all his arrogance fled; the boy in him felt the need of caresses and the desire for companionship.

He said nothing, or very little, and that little so honestly stupid and tender that even a heroine from Florence Barclay would have laughed. And then, lying side by side, their lips sought each other. The little boy became a suddenly audacious man.

"What I love in you," said Beatrice, "is that pleasure makes you all the more considerate."

He smiled, his eyes dark and gentle.

"Oh, my dear, heart of mine!"

She looked at him tenderly. He considered himself unfeeling, but twice she had seen him weep in her arms: the first time from anxiety, the second from jealousy. She had not forgotten and the remembrance was sweet. Their desire was much the same, a cerebral passion which knew as well how to profit by the ghost of a caress as by all violence; the mind played its soft inducement to the body's exultation.

"Ronny," she said, "don't leave me this evening. This is one of my bad days and when you leave I shall loathe my life and wax metaphysical. But as long as I feel my hand in yours, all is well."

He clasped the supple fingers.

"I shall hold you tight. If you will never send me away, that will be glorious, Beatrice."

It was then that she noticed the portrait of Christopher Varèze as if he were emerging from a mist. He appeared immense. By a strange association of ideas, she seemed to hear him say: "The first quality of a chief is justice; if he discovers himself in error, he must admit it without shame and make amends, no matter what the price."

"Ronald," she said abruptly, "what do you think of a captain who, on his own ship, punishes with his own hand a man who has insulted him and, in repulsing the attack, causes his death without intending to do so?"

"He is a murderer, my dear."

"But if the man, a wretch who had assaulted a woman, was drunk and was threatening the officer with his knife?"

"Just the same, he is a murderer; what a foolish question!" He had risen and was regarding her with a sudden coldness. The seaman, the whole race of seamen, the honor of the men at sea;

such things one does not discuss . . . "Only a woman would ask that, Beatrice. But tell me what it's about."

"No," she said slowly, "women often reason less simply than men, and I believe you are mistaken."

Something casual, cruel, had arisen between them. Beatrice got up.

"I've changed my mind, I don't need your hand now. Go back home, Ronny!"

He jumped up as if Beatrice had slapped him, and left without a word.

"What have I done?" she thought. "Am I crazy? . . . What has happened?

"No," she murmured, "I hate this English hardness."

However, she went to the window and watched Wendley pass before the Washington statue; if he had turned she would have signaled to him. But he did not turn, and suddenly she was afraid. She ran to her bedroom.

Scarcely had she fallen asleep when a nightmare assailed her. She was on the open sea in a sinking ship. Captain Franqueville, straight and

calm on the bridge, braved the tempest and the passengers who threatened him or besought him frantically. Wendley, who was among the passengers, tried to take the command away from Franqueville. The two men rushed at each other, crouching like crude boxers, and Wendley was hurled over the rail. Then, rid of the enemy, Franqueville, drawing from his pocket a miniature violin, subdued the men and the waves. "You see," he said to Beatrice, "it is I you must trust."

Beatrice awoke, the absurd dream still weighing heavily upon her. Through the open window she saw lightning. The storm was the explanation of her incoherent quarrel with Wendley and of her idiotic dream.

She took up the telephone, calling Élysées 66-99, which answered immediately.

"I was wrong, Ronald."

He was not asleep. She knew that he had not been asleep, that he had been waiting, and that was enough to enable her to apologize without shame. She explained.

"Let us speak of it no more," said Wendley.

She felt that he was still angry; his British pride was insatiable.

"Yes, let us speak of it and I shall beg your pardon."

She heard a kiss coming across the wire and smiled to feel herself so easily the stronger.

Men were children, all men!

VIII

Days passed. Beatrice plunged into the social whirlpool as in a bath of alcohol at ninety degrees, a bath renewed each day, which lashed her nerves, slowly destroying them. Wendley, who had never lived otherwise, followed her, merely adding to the program intimate hours not calculated to permit her to recuperate her badly scattered forces. De Manneville and the Spaniard, obstinate gamblers who knew not how to curb their losses, accompanied the couple with poor grace, hoping still for a return of luck.

But on certain evenings for some time Beatrice had felt the need of being rid of all three of them. For this reason she accepted the invitation to the Norfeld dinner which occurred as regularly every year as the *Prix Goncourt.*

Before the war, in that age of prehistoric nicknames, they called the Countess Norfeld, née Princess Tracomtel and penniless, the T. W. F.

(Tracomtel Without Francs). She stood for Science; according to her she had launched into the world radium, aviation and the X-ray. Now, through habit, she was still known by three letters, the same number but not the same letters. She had become the L. O. N., because she presided at the Society for Frenchwomen (section of the ninth district) of the League of Nations. These three letters belonged to her, moreover, by right: they were her initials.

This dinner was given in honor of Geneva. Monsieur Briand had been expected but had telephoned around six o'clock that he would not be able to come. However, he had sent (with a Republican guard) a crate of peaches from Cocherel, his Locarno orchard, where are assembled, pacifically, the best species of European fruit trees. So even if the president of the Council could not be there, his proxy was present in the form of peaches scattered about among the leaves of a vine running the length of the table. Grouped about the dining altar decorated with heavy silver candelabra, were his Excellency Monseigneur Delorio;

Beatrice; the countess; her husband, a great blond bear always ready to devour his wife in any discussion,—this expected slaughter was the attraction of the dinner; Admiral Carrier who served on the Opium Commission at Geneva; Eliana Lampescu, the Roumanian poetess; a Czecho-Slovakian minister; a Swiss banker; a republican-socialist deputy; many others; and finally Prince George Tracomtel, the countess's brother, noted for his unfortunate marriages which, on account of their excesses and their number, were no longer even funny. His sister was soliciting the Vatican on his behalf (which explained the presence of Monseigneur Delorio this evening) for an annulment which would permit this intrepid collector of domestic adventures to add an experience with a very rich woman, a wine merchant from Champagne, who was dreaming of a prince's coat of arms for her bottles.

In this society of nations, Beatrice symbolized the merchant marine, between the poetic Roumanian lady and the admiral of opium. The dinner started with a cantata by the countess, com-

posed of all the known motifs on Rome, all of which the prelate swallowed with his consommé without flinching. His Excellency even condescended to respond with a couplet on the piety of the American-Catholic Democracy—he had been the papal nuncio at Washington—who concerned themselves with church affairs as much as with their private enterprises and who wanted to decorate their cathedrals and their chapels with the same marble staircases, the same mechanical pianos, reinforced concrete and Gothic stalls that they provided in their secular buildings, for they were humiliated to see the house of the Lord less ornate and rich than the halls of their stores and banks.

His Excellency was embellishing this pharasaical theme, with his great Piedmontese nose—a field-piece mounted on the two wheels of his spectacles—pointing at the countess, when another voice drowned his.

"The Voronoff method has given me, personally, excellent results, Mademoiselle, I assure you."

It was the Count de Norfeld speaking to the poetess, Eliana Lampescu.

The nuncio was silent; the countess entreated in anguish:

"Vinceslas!"

The guests suddenly scented the catastrophe which had lured them like children before the cages in the Jardin des Plantes; they calculated that this time the countess would certainly be devoured, but contrary to all expectation, Vinceslas assumed the foolish air of a bear gorged with sugar.

"I was saying to Mademoiselle Lampescu, who belongs to an agricultural country and is interested in breeding, that by using the Voronoff method on my herds at Sottencourt I have much improved my string of Durhams."

The disappointment was general and the desired spectacle had to be put off another year.

"Moreover, Monseigneur," began the sheep breeder.

"No, not 'Monseigneur.' "

"Your Eminence . . ."

"No, 'Excellency,' " corrected the nuncio dryly.

"Your Excellency," continued the count with a

Nordic obstinacy which was exaggerated by the sight of his crimson spouse, "the Voronoff method should not be repudiated by the Church because the first monkeys that were used in the professor's experiments were sent by the missionaries of Oubanghi."

"If you would like, we will consider the question, my dear Count, in our next council," concluded Delorio.

At that the thread of the conversation running round the table was cut into small segments. Every one concerned himself with his neighbor. The admiral, a splendid seaman but a well-known anticleric,—he was president of the Breton Reds,—was delighted to see the count spike the curé's guns. His exultation made him loquacious. To a question from Beatrice he responded eagerly.

"The reason I bother with the League is that in France there are no longer any ships or seamen. Any one who hangs on in the profession is demoralized; let a seaman do his duty, then he is pounced upon and forced out. Ah! how unjust we are! But you know as much about it as I."

She was not listening now. "Let a seaman do his duty, then he is pounced upon and forced out!" Something smote cruelly at her heart.

The countess rose. A servant in Swiss costume opened the wide doors of the smoking-room; two gowns started for it together, his Excellency Monseigneur Delorio and Eliana Lampescu, both of whom enjoyed a good cigar. Without concerning herself further with her guests the L. O. N. hurried to her brother to comfort him with a glass of champagne for her husband's blunder in alienating Delorio and thus removing further than ever his chance for an annulment. That dolt Vinceslas! She could have killed him with pleasure, but the occasion had passed; the public would have understood none of it.

The first to abandon the smoking-room, his Excellency appeared in the salon and condescended to sit by Beatrice. He asked news of old Princess Angela whom he had known at Genoa at the time of his vicarage at San Lorenzo. This episcopal notice caused George de Tracomtel also to drift toward Beatrice; he saw in her the possible dove

from the ark, bearing in her beak his annulment from Rome.

She granted him everything he asked except to listen to him. The republican-socialist came to pay his respects to the president of the Mediterranean Company; his homage fell flat.

The man was ruffled. "You don't care much for politicians, do you, Princess?" he said.

"No," she answered, "I prefer sailors; they are cleaner."

She turned her back and, pleading a headache, ordered her car.

For a month she had been bored everywhere with every one, Wendley included. She was conscious of what held her to him and was filled all at once with distaste, and that without reason, for Wendley loved her honestly and apparently for life.

The next day Beatrice went again to her office. She had planned three days of merrymaking on board the new steamer, the *Massilia*, whose forty-five thousand tons, nine decks and three funnels were to do honor to her guests at Marseilles. She

took charge of the program and the invitations, an overwhelming task. Those legally united would want to be separated, and others held together by lighter bonds, to be invited together. The prospect of festivities at Marseilles—Oriental squalor and chowder—excited all the resident officials; a gratuitous illusion of holiday for these Buddhas without wisdom, held all year at their gilded offices by the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor. This Comédie Française was in three convoys. Society having decreed that the first day was the only smart one, all those not invited for that day were demanding first place by telephone, for fear that there would be nothing to eat the other two days. The secretaries, maddened by orders and counter-orders, loosed squalls of hail and an atmosphere of storm; the president alone remained calm and set a stoic example.

However, one afternoon she suddenly abandoned her forced labors to find her way through the corridor—later, she had to admit she was carrying out the only possible conclusion of a long mental debate—to knock at Serres' door. The of-

fice of the personnel director, small and disordered, looked like the shop of a Hongkong spice dealer. Serres himself, with his large round spectacles, would have passed well enough for the Europeanized Chinese merchant, a doctor of the University of Paris and disciple of Moscow. Beatrice estimated, having always seen him without glasses, that he had aged at least ten years.

Nothing could have warned Franqueville's friend of this visit from the president. However, he did not show any surprise. He simply removed the spectacles and ten years at the same time, and waited.

"I have come to ask you, Monsieur Serres, for Captain Franqueville's address," said Beatrice, without beating round the bush.

"Captain Franqueville's address, Madame!"

"Yes, I read the report. It is filled with confusing things. I feel that we have done him an injustice; I want to repair it."

Serres, after a prolonged examination of the parquet floor, finally raised his head.

"But how to undertake such a thing! There is

nothing to be done now, Madame. Franqueville is far away."

"I shall see to that myself, Monsieur Serres. I shall go find him."

Serres started. His sharp gaze searched Beatrice.

"Franqueville is far away, Princess; he is fleeing from all that recalls the company. Moreover, how would he confide in you—he who trusts no one—especially knowing who you are? I am his only friend, Madame, and I venture to advise you. Renounce this project."

"On the contrary, I am determined on it."

"Madame, Franqueville has suffered cruelly, and I do not see how you can mend his wounded pride."

"I have always succeeded, Monsieur Serres, and I have undertaken more difficult things."

"The poor fellow was kicked out without justice."

"Give me the address."

"Misfortune has made him intolerable to himself."

"Already I have asked you three times, Monsieur," said the voice of the president.

Serres bowed, plunged his arm into a drawer and brought out a note-book.

"You will find there two addresses, Princess: one is Franqueville's at Oran; the other is that of Professor Masseret who teaches Arabic there and might serve you as an intermediary."

"I thank you," said Beatrice.

She extended her hand to her employee.

Five days later the *Figaro* announced that the Princess Doriani had sailed alone, for her health's sake, on her yacht, *Venus,* for a cruise of the Mediterranean.

PART TWO

I

THE *Figaro* had deceived its subscribers, who every morning take their gossip in bed with their *café au lait.* The *Venus* was still enjoying her siesta among the humble craft of the harbor at Marseilles, anchored to the *quai* of Cour Neuve.

Women are creatures of caprice. They are always wanting something, but not for long. Eight hundred kilometers of railroad track can appease many scruples; Beatrice's conscience had fallen asleep with the motion of the train. Arriving at Marseilles, she had lost all desire to embark. She appeared on the *Venus* just in time to beg of Captain Allegret, in his helmet and white gloves, a delay of twenty-four hours. The delay was granted, along with eight pairs of oars to row her to the Cercle Nautique, without the captain's asking her for explanations, which might have been embarrassing. How confess that a real Marseillaise

can not resist the little dark piles of shellfish which solicit one on the sidewalk between a quarter of a lemon and a bottle of vinegar? How reveal that one is going hunting for the lost moods of childhood among the shops for ships' furnishings, with their spy-glasses, compasses and cordage, in Rue Beauvau, the old street of seamen, where stands the building of the Mediterranean Company?

Reverting to her girlhood, Beatrice played truant. A carriage took her down the Cours Puget past the plane trees and the old gray buildings. There was the chilly house of the Varèzes, no longer inhabited, but still kept by Beatrice with a sentimentality of which no one would have believed her capable.

The building, of the eighteenth century, might have made a charming dwelling, but Monsieur de Varèze, President of the Society of Old Marseilles, had given his attention only to the top story where he had collected antiques typical of his bold and sensual taste: heads of adolescents and Roman emperors, busts of Venus, fragments of goddesses and

nymphs, and votive bas-reliefs which satisfied his avid craving for beauty. He left the lower stories to Madame de Varèze.

Beatrice stopped the carriage, but did not get out. She wanted to make sure once more that her childhood home had not flown away with the first leaves of the plane trees. Raising her head, she looked fondly at the dirty windows of the museum which had been the refuge of her father when, after his business dinners, he wished to tear his guests away from the telephone down-stairs. They would have asked the number of God Himself, if the occasion demanded, to catch a client or secure an order. Her father inveighed against them with the insolence of a potentate.

"Miserable Phocæans," he would say, "you have inherited from the Greeks only their most hideous traits: the craving for money, the love of gambling, the passion for trade, the intoxication of deceit. You will expiate your crimes here; you will stay for an hour to smoke peacefully here in the midst of beautiful things, far from the wheat of Odessa, the wines of Algeria, the lumber of

Yünman, the oils of Sfax, the marbles of Portofino, far from traffic and counters."

And the Phocæans took their medicine with a smile, for they could not get along without the ships and the credit of their censor.

The coachman blew his nose, anxious to arouse the silent passenger who had stopped so long before this dead house. Beatrice was now contemplating the lower story. It was there that her mother, a slave to duty and order, had for years submitted to self-inflicted toil among the piles of linens, household provisions and the account books which she had kept herself. She was consecrated to humble tasks, leaving all the glory to those two mad pagans, her husband and her daughter, whom she admired but who horrified her. She had pointed shoulders, a spare figure, and an intelligent face, reserved, mystic and thin—the remote face of Provence. Her name was Marie. There were twenty pietàs in her room. Monsieur de Varèze and Beatrice were ashamed of her mittens and her black conventual dresses. They found her boresome. The family home was the scene of

a struggle without armistice between this Maid of the Guard and the impious pair of the third floor. Marie de Varèze, yielding as always, was the first to lay down her arms. One morning, following a fever contracted in a workroom where she had toiled for ten years without complaining, she passed away, alone, in the dawn, so as not to bother any one, having asked that her husband and daughter not be told, because they needed sleep. Her death, almost clandestine, had, to their great astonishment, left Monsieur de Varèze and Beatrice more helpless than travelers arriving on a winter's evening in an out-of-the-way station to discover the last train gone. From that time on, wisdom and order had deserted the household; they lived as they were able, each in his own way. Now, to-day, Beatrice was alone, and the old house made her shiver.

"*Quai de la Cour Neuve,*" she ordered the coachman, who moved with alacrity, doubtless suspecting some drama.

She returned to the *Venus.* In maritime cities—she had no use for any others—her habit was to re-

main at the door, without seeking to open it. The old harbor of Marseilles was her favorite spot, the very soul of the Phocæan city, the royal court of the Mediterranean, as noble in its proportions as the most beautiful squares in the world: the Concorde, Saint Mark's, the Place Vendôme, or the Place Stanislas in Nancy. Closed by the projections of its two forts and by the trapezium of the shifting bridge it looked like a warm and boldly decorated salon: the salon of the sea. Furniture in all genres: antiques in the Greek vessels and Turkish feluccas; modern art in the power-boats, nickel trimmed and gaily colored, surmounted by dais and striped awning; art *nouveau* in the *Venus* with its brass instruments like long streaks of light, the monocles of its port-holes, and its white hull cut by the mint-green of its water-line. Yes, this harbor was a beautiful salon, bright with the names of women, goddesses and birds, a luxurious salon with a carpet of moiré silk.

The carriage stopped between two rows of casks which smelled of sweet wine and bore Spanish labels. Beatrice boarded a launch and reached the

Venus. They were expecting her. Knowing her quick to change her mind, they were always expecting her. Captain Allegret received her with a smile; his twenty-four-hour delay did not end till midnight. Venus reentered her temple.

Beatrice was hungry. They served her tea in the small dining-room, made vast by solitude. Already her liberty weighed upon her. Three ghosts came and sat with her. She thought of the pleasures of Paris which were becoming daily more licentious. A sign of these times—ruled by the devil. With whom was Wendley deceiving her? She would send him a telegram; certainly she would not leave without him. . . .

A maid brought the mail, a single weighty letter. Beatrice recognized the writing of the old Princess Angela and opened the envelope with a sigh.

My dear Beatrice:

I have just read in the *Stampa* that you are leaving for a cruise of the Mediterranean. I hope that you will not forget your old Aunt Angela, and that you will stop at Genoa. First of all, I should be very happy to see you again,

for I've had no news of you since your last visit here. And then I need to consult you. I hope you will at least take time to spend several hours here to admire the pier of my regretted and venerated friend the Duke of Galliéra, which is at last completed. Not knowing your plans, dear Beatrice, I ask you at any rate to read this letter carefully.

You will certainly recall the project of the sculptor, Tedetti, which was presented to you several months ago by the artist himself. His work is finished. Tedetti has accomplished a masterpiece worthy of a Phidias, which will produce a sublime effect in the groves of the Campo Santo. I am sending you the photograph they made of it. This bit of marble is superb. Those privileged to attend the presentation made by Tedetti himself in his studio in the Corso Andrea Podesta, one of the most beautiful in the city, were carried away with enthusiasm. The Duchess of San Pierra was there, the Rossi princes, the Rivetas, Senator Bizoni, Commendatore Moselli, our director at Genoa. His Royal Highness, the Duke of the Abruzzi, had intended to come, but at the last minute his Highness was detained by another engagement. In spite of his absence, which I personally regretted, Tedetti's entertainment was a grand success. They complimented me effusively on the theme I had chosen. I was proud for

all the Doriani who now will have a mausoleum worthy of a princely family. I am sure that you will be pleased with it too. Don't worry, for thoughts of such things will not make you die. As I told Commendatore Moselli, I have only followed the example of Catherine Campodonico. Do you know her epitaph? Here it is:

"By selling nuts and cracknel in the Holy Grounds of Acqua Santo du Garbo and Saint Cyprien, braving the wind, the sun and the rain to assure myself of honorable bread in my old age, I have saved a little money; and in order to be remembered by this monument in a distant time, I, Catherine Campodonico (surnamed 'the peasant'), as a true lover of marble have had this stone erected while I still have life."

The epitaph is in old Genoese dialect. I am perhaps the only one in our society who can still speak it; excuse the poor translation. I am telling you about la Campodonico because Senator Bizoni contended that on the monument I had been coiffed like the cracknel merchant, which made Tedetti furious. These artists are savage beasts who can not endure the least criticism without wanting to devour you. I had a good laugh.

However, it is not a question of myself or of Perceval Doriani, truly beautiful in his doge's bonnet. What concerns me now is dear Ottorino, your husband. He, so gentle, so un-

assuming, has given cause for lively discussion; what did he think in Heaven when he heard us debate such futile things? And yet they have their importance. I do not want people who knew him to say when looking at our tomb: "Princess Angela Doriani, who ordered this monument, did not even know how her nephew was dressed." That is the question. Tedetti has shown Ottorino standing in his sack coat, holding a high hat in hand. He claims that was his ordinary costume. I contended that as the sack coat is usually worn in the afternoon, the high hat should be changed for a felt. Tedetti will listen to nothing; he insists that authentic gentlemen of that date wore high hats during the daytime. What is the truth? Another question: Tedetti has carved four buttons on Ottorino's coat. Now your dear husband always wore his clothes loose and not fastened up like a preacher's frock coat. Give me exact information on this other point. Tedetti pays no attention to me; he is as obstinate as a donkey, but he will accept your opinion. That is why I decided to write to you. There remains the epitaph which should be engraved on the monument. I hesitate between these two: "Happy he who, in the sea of life, has such a faithful pilot"; and something from the one hundred seventh Psalm: "The waves mount to the heavens; they go down again to the depths. The

soul cries unto the Lord and He bringeth it unto the desired haven."

Both seem suitable to me for the founder of the Mediterranean fleet; I shall choose the one which seems better to you.

Adieu, dear Beatrice. I should have been happy to go with you on the *Venus* and see again the cities I visited at your age. But where could I join you?

Assurances of affection from your old aunt,
Princess Angela Doriani.

P. S. Captain Moselli has told me just now that the *Venus* is still at Marseilles. That decides me to leave. I count on being with you to-morrow evening; we will talk about all this.

Beatrice turned to the steward:

"Ask the captain to come here," she said.

Two hours later the *Venus* was on the high seas.

II

Beatrice left the poop around which, under the green eye of the foremast, she had been walking for a quarter of an hour in the company of Captain Allegret. It was getting very dark. The *Venus* seemed to be boring through a tunnel. Clasping her silvery cloak about her, Beatrice went below. At the foot of the double staircase an implacable mirror, between the two white eyes of the barometer and the clock, returned to her a very somber lady.

"What has happened to me?" she thought. "Moon-struck, blue? This is the first time that I have gone to sea reluctantly. Is it an omen? It's this empty, empty boat!"

In her suite her maid, Adrienne, was waiting, her head on her breast, but sleeping with only one eye closed, like a cat. Adrienne was a fat person, apparently without age, who had the soul of a Jesuit Superior. A familiar impatience seized

Beatrice in the presence of this silent jailer whom nothing escaped. She said:

"You may go. I shall undress without you."

Even before the formal order, the door closed softly. The cabin of satinwood slept under the protection of a night lamp and a very complicated ventilator in the ceiling. Beatrice turned on the lights, sighed and, bending over, pulled her dress off over her head. A faint perfume arose, as from a bouquet of sweet peas. She threw her combination to the right, her brassière to the left; her stockings followed. Nude under the glaring light, all white with her blue dress at her feet, she was truly Venus of the perfect body, Venus rising from the waves. Venus the love goddess . . . "Radiant, emerging from the burning foam. . . ."

Love! She laid her hand on her breast to feel if her heart was still beating. She had touched the right side; she no longer knew! She began to laugh. Passing her palms over her small breasts, over the divine curve of her hips, she gazed at herself in pride. What difference did love make? She ran to her bath.

Half an hour later she found her bed too large, too cold.

"A glacial bed to occupy alone!" Suddenly she seemed to see Gonzalo Real, slim as a greyhound, bending over her.

She turned away and buried her face in the pillow. A perfume that Wendley had given her arose from it. They had slept together in that perfume, had loved in its fragrance. She could feel her cheek against the naked chest of the Englishman. In a voice reserved for such moments, he was saying: "My darling, my sweetheart," and caressing her hair.

She must go to sleep. And this perfume which filled the room . . . and that racket from the engine . . .

"One would think they had locked up a bull in the hold. . . . No, it's my nerves."

The sea crashed against the port-holes, and Beatrice was cold. A small closet near her bed contained her bottles: Scotch whisky, gin, port and Three Star Martel. Again the reminder of Wendley. Beatrice reached for a drink. Why had she

come away in this fashion? She knew herself; she knew that she could never stay alone anywhere. At the third little glass, she was warm. She sat down quite unclothed on her bed.

"This Franqueville bores me," she said aloud. "What has come over me? Am I Solomon, or what?"

She seized a book from her night-table: *The Moroccan World.* She turned the pages.

"Women: There are several words in Arabic which mean to love. If one loves a woman violently, one does not say 'Ne habb' or 'nebri,' that is, 'I am in love,' but 'Rani marbot,' for that is passionate love. Such love exists in Morocco oftener than one might think. Certainly marriages of inclination are rare because the parents marry their children very young without consulting them. But that does not prevent love from blossoming in the hearts of the young people. They go without food and are stricken with that malady of languor which we rarely see now in Europe."

Beatrice reflected. Like others she had believed in the love which one can die for. She had sought it. Now she knew; no one was necessary to any one else. The book fell.

There was a man's step on the stairway . . .

The officer was going up to begin his watch . . .

This Franqueville affair was becoming oppressive and was making her ridiculous. She counted on dealing with him with a high hand. This grand disdainful devil, this bear nourished with honey from the Bible, would have to show himself humble to be pardoned, or it would be so much the worse for him! She took another sip, and stretched out flushed and warm between the sheets. Now to sleep!

"I shall count sheep, or look at the ceiling, the ceiling." This time she had closed her eyes. . . .

The sun wakened her, a sun already high, wasting its time trying to warm the ocean. Beatrice welcomed it as a god.

She was reborn, having forgotten everything. Her soul, bathed in sleep, renewed its keen relish for this maritime journeying which distinguished her from nearly all other women. She belonged to her ship before all else; she was one of a separate people, the people of the sea.

On deck a glorious Mediterranean morning and the friendly face of Captain Allegret greeted her.

The sun glossed the silky waves. The air stimulated her like alcohol. Beatrice passed twice without temptation before the wireless station. The sky, the water, the fluttering flags, the tinkling bells, the cabin-boys galloping barefoot: this was enough, this was everything.

With her skirt flattened against her long legs by the breeze and her blouse open at the throat, Beatrice let herself bake in the warm salt air. She thrilled to a delightful vitality. Inspecting the *Venus* from bridge to hull, she allowed nothing to escape her; she had the eye of a master, and her requests were always justified. The men obeyed her without a murmur. Divesting herself of all femininity, she was now only an officer on her ship. That was the secret of her ascendency over all the sailors under her orders. There was nothing equivocal in this daughter of the Varèzes.

At lunch, Beatrice invited the captain and his mate to sit at her table. Her candor and simplicity touched the hearts of these solitary men; she was endowed with the exquisite art of putting each one at his ease.

They talked of their arrival, and Beatrice asked questions.

"Captain, what do you know about this city of Oran?"

"Princess, Oran is nothing but a warehouse where you will find piled up all the products of the most important colonies of the world. Algiers and Constantine were taken by arms; Oran is not marked with the sign of war; it is the fatherland of the clearing agents. No art. That will come later. At night no echoing music, only the bellowing of donkeys and the bleating of the flocks coming down toward the port from the plateaus behind the city."

"I can see," said Beatrice, "that Oran is a grand place! Fortunately, we will not stay there long enough to miss the flutes and the derboukhas."

She got up and went to her awning forward on the deck. Stretched out on the cushions, she bathed in the humid air. Sweetness, Mediterranean sensuality, calm hours in the streams of golden sunshine. She had found once more her own sea, the sea of Aphrodite, the belt of the cities dedicated

to Venus: Port-Vendres, Porto Venere, Cherchel crowned with roses, Cyprus, cradle of the goddess; beautiful gulf surrounded by love, her domain!

She knew all its currents, all its channels, all its treacheries and all its allurements. She had played at being goddess there and she had played at being siren. She had always brought here the lover whom she wished to enslave, because the sea became her accomplice with its nights like tales of the Orient and its music echoed along the shore. Although alone now she was recaptured by this incomparable sea, plunged by it into a state of ecstasy which made everything trivial.

So it was that she received without annoyance the news that the Mediterranean fleet was now at Oran encumbering the harbor and that it would be preferable to anchor at Mers-el-Kébir, the nearest base.

"Make for Mers-el-Kébir," replied Beatrice. "A launch can take me to the city."

The next day the *Venus* sailed past the city of the clearing agents without stopping, and cast anchor ten kilometers from the port under a

savage laceration in the mountainside and a sinister Spanish fortress. A few huts, peaceful as those of a Provençal hamlet, dozed along the beach. The crew, well informed by the pilot, had their eyes on the Café of the Fleet. A motor-boat would take Beatrice to Oran. She was anxious to make an end of the business quickly, but her depression had disappeared. Over the cliff passed a hot wind which bore to the sea the odors of the Southlands, animal, vegetable, subtly impure, fevered by the hot mouth of approaching summer.

III

THE Hotel Continental at Oran has refused to imitate the white and gold decorations of the palaces. A provincial establishment, its equipment is without distinction. It is likewise a prying place; the great telescope on the terrace, trained on the city, indefatigably spies on the Boulevard Séguin, the rendezvous of all the Oran country at the ritual hours of the promenade. Princess Doriani had chosen it merely because her Conti guide-book had recommended its view of the sea; for her an irresistible argument. She cast herself upon the hotel as a refugee—the African sun had scored a knockout in the first round—and was welcomed on the threshold by a military salute, the comical salute of the old clown Salem, the black porter.

"Will Madame please step over to the office?"

Beatrice smilingly followed the red fez, the blue blouse and the two black sticks on which flapped a

pair of exaggerated sandals. The incomparable Adrienne came next with the overnight bag. She was not hot, being superior to human weakness.

In the hall they came upon a scene from a character drama: a painter from Tunis and a modiste from Paris, who, in displaying their wares, were throwing their colors at each other's heads in spite of the temperature.

"Your yellow gown is killing my canvasses!"

"Your pictures are ruining my gowns!"

The Jewish bell-boy and the Moorish bootblack composed the audience.

"All *mabouls*," explained Salem with a smile full of forbearance for the wickedness of the whites. Stopping at the office guiltless of a manager,—it was the hour of the siesta,—he presented a card to the traveler. Beatrice registered as Meillan, her mother's name. She had made use of an incognita on other more perilous occasions, and it might be useful now. The president of the Mediterranean Company sensed the inanity of snobbishness in this Algerian caravansary. This Salem with his old black sorcerer's hand had opened the

doors of childhood memories: *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Chocolate and the New Circus,* Sunday reading and Sunday walks. Decidedly the adventure was starting well. She climbed the stairs to her room. The little blue book had not lied. Her window framed the sparkling sea, the wharf with its pyramids of coal, its walls of bags, its rows of casks; but before attaining the purifying stretch of the ocean, her gaze must follow the length of a ravine bordered on one side by planted fields and on the other by refuse of all descriptions. In the foreground stood mangled sickly palm trees, their gray plumes devoured by the sun. However, Beatrice did not see a mournful Africa, defeated, stretching slothfully to the sea. What she saw was Africa alive and alert; colors and noises, intermingled. Convoys in endless trains filed down the slope which descended to the harbor, teams of eight, ten or a dozen mules bearing in victorious rhythm harvest and vintage to the hungry maws of the ships.

The activity in the city made Beatrice ashamed of her idleness. She summoned her maid.

"Go to the office, Adrienne, get a map and ask where the quarter of la Calère is."

Again she was alone. She reflected. She had not come to rest in this commercial traveler's room. She did not need to wait till the next day to look for Franqueville. Standing at her window, she looked over the harbor, over the wharves. Doubtless he was there, ready to finish his day's work; in an hour he would return home.

"Let's see. If I find him, I still have to know what I'm going to say to him."

She had already thought of that, but evasively. She shrank from examining this Franqueville affair, not liking to confess that the stature of the man, his looks, the strength and nobility of his bearing counted for something in this sudden call of justice. The question was hidden in those depths of the soul which we attempt to ignore. But here at the foot of the wall, on the threshold itself, decision must be taken. How was she to see justice done? This man had run afoul of fate for having defended her, the Princess Doriani, against insulting remarks. Insulting remarks! Her life

of adventure, her long pursuit of a mirage, had been for spectators only a succession of scandals. Like a setting in the theater which is colored differently according to the ray which illumines it, the free Princess Doriani was in shadow or in light. Ignoble eyes looked through the deforming glasses of their own coarseness; God knows what terms this person punished by Franqueville, this former chauffeur or house servant, might have used in speaking of her.

Woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!

"Come," said Beatrice to herself, "here I am in the Bible too!"

She received the information obtained by Adrienne at the office: la Calère was the Spanish quarter, poor and unsavory.

"Would Madame like me to go with her?"

"Thank you, no," said Beatrice; "go rest yourself."

She passed a stifling quarter of an hour in the torture-room of her conscience. For the first time she shrank from feeling herself judged by a stranger. She took several steps, her hands crossed be-

hind her: an old trick of the Varèzes. A mirror halted her; pride rose again in her eyes; she smiled scornfully.

"I shall see this chap and I shall tell him that I had not studied his case carefully enough and that I regret my mistake. I can easily explain my presence here; I have taken advantage of a cruise to come to make amends and to propose to him myself that he take up again his service with the company. This said, I shall concede nothing."

Anxious to pass unnoticed, she went out dressed in a tailored suit of white silk—white clothing in the colonies serves as a uniform—with a sport hat and without a jewel. When the drinkers stared at her from behind their glass cages, she knew that her beauty, devoid of adornment, was none the less irresistible. *Venus Victrix.*

Beatrice was soon in Rue d'Orléans at the foot of la Calère which hoisted the pennants of its shirts and handkerchiefs by thousands in the sun above the city. An inn opened its red and gold door on the sidewalk; Beatrice entered the patio. The meal for the boarders was cooking on a large

stove tended by a very dignified old man in a black hat. The princess approached the man who listened to her, fixing her with the long anxious gaze of the deaf. She bent toward the slender gold ring which hung from his shaggy ear. Where would she find the Place Isabelle? The old man smiled; he had understood. With his hat in his hand, he accompanied Beatrice as far as the stairway in Rue de Malaga and there with a malicious smile he pointed out, high toward the sky, the top of the steps. Beatrice vigorously attacked the stairway. She wanted to be through with this. Side-streets assailed her with their crude colors: blue, yellow, green and red walls; squalling babies and wrangling women; others, dressed up and silent, displayed, as if in her honor, humble altars in the open air, decorated with jars of essence and old cake-boxes from which emerged geraniums and pinks. Each window offered to the passer-by its pot of basil or rue or its cage of birds. Finally Beatrice reached the Place Isabelle, a wretched terrace before some fishermen's huts; a balcony built in the open air from which hung only rags.

The distress of one of her old officers touched her in a sensitive spot. She would not have believed it! She looked for the number; there were only seven houses. Gaping women and dirty little brats had surrounded her already.

"If you please," asked Beatrice, "where is number eight?"

Ten heads turned like silent weather-vanes toward a ruin which lay to the west of the quarter. One wall only of the green façade remained standing, a ruin of the weather or victim of a sudden attack by earthquake. Some geological anger had struck the meanest hovel in this quarter of the poor.

"That is it," said a somber voice. "The house that died."

Beatrice drew a note-book from her bag and consulted the address given her by Captain Serres. A young girl near her seemed to understand.

"Señor Francese has left," she said softly.

Beatrice turned with a question in her eyes. No one answered. No one knew where the stranger was. She had come so far to hurl herself against

a pile of stones. She withdrew slowly. Beside her an old woman with the eyes of a crow exclaimed:

"It was he who brought misfortune to the house. He talked to no one! He never answered our *buenos dias. Santa Maria!* Jesus has punished him."

So, bad luck, if not the divine curse, still clung to Franqueville.

"It is high time to come to his help," thought Beatrice. "But who knows whether he has even let this old teacher of Arabic know that he is alive?"

She was irritated by this void, this bottomless pit, this unbounded waste, these non-committal forces which make one so helpless when a person disappears without a word. Suddenly she was in a hurry to find Professor Masseret.

"Not that way, Señora, that is Suicide Street."

It was the old woman who had rejoined her and who was crossing herself at every word. The dead house! Suicide Street! Beatrice threw some coins which converted the place into a battle-field, and plunged again into the street with the stairway.

IV

After a fifteen minutes' walk along a roundway, Beatrice skirted the Wesford Gardens which perpetuate the memory of a former English consul, a garden planted above the Spanish fortifications, like a bouquet in the muzzle of an arquebus. It was here that Professor Masseret lived, master of the public chair of Arabic at Oran, teacher and friend of Captain Franqueville, according to the information of Captain Serres.

"Provided," thought Beatrice, "that his house too hasn't been dissolved by some occult power!"

A green door which bore the name of Masseret was her answer. Through a Moorish peep-hole, she saw a straight path bordered by two hedges of roses so close and full that they gave a feeling of solidity. At the end a white trellis was splashed with the blood of a bougainvillea vine. A veritable bastion of flowers. From the rear came skipping a petite Spanish servant. She opened the

door smilingly and without a question preceded Beatrice down the seven steps which led to the garden.

Beatrice stopped on the third.

"Shall I not disturb the professor?"

"One never disturbs him, Madame," replied the servant.

Farther off she heard voices behind the shrubbery of cactus and lantanias.

"But," ventured Beatrice, "Monsieur Masseret is not alone."

"Monsieur is always at home to everybody."

Beatrice hesitated.

"First give my card to your master, please."

The Spanish girl disappeared, and Beatrice waited in the little garden: garden of Paradise with its beds of geraniums, roses, mimosas and date trees; garden of Hesperides with its pomegranates, medlars and orange trees with their thousands of golden fruits! A thread of water sang through the hollow of a green tile.

Through the cactus Beatrice now could see two men: a European and an Arab. The European

had a short gray beard under a student's cap, and a shirt and jacket of white cloth. While talking he nervously moved his long legs, which were clad in leggings. The Arab, motionless, a shapeless mass of striped cloth, revealed the young face of an ascetic; his hypnotic eyes peered from under the hood of his jellaba. He held in his hand a mountain staff. The servant unceremoniously handed Beatrice's card to her master. He read it without surprise, although it bore on unimpeachable vellum: "Princess Doriani, President of the Mediterranean Company," which ordinarily created a distinct impression. Then he rose and after a quick word to the servant leaned toward his companion who swiftly lowered his hood. Beatrice came forward with that amiable and somewhat weary air which women have who are condemned by their beauty never to rest from pleasing.

"I have come very far to see you, Monsieur," she said, "and I hope you will excuse me for disturbing you and also for disturbing . . ."

She darted an amused glance toward the lowered hood.

"My friend, Mohammed ben Slimane," interrupted the professor, "and a saint. He wisely fears beauty, Madame."

She smiled frankly.

"At any rate, he is not afraid of the heat!"

"That's true," said Masseret, with a surprisingly youthful laugh, "but it is written that the dervish resists all. But what would you expect of a sentimental fellow? Each of his garments is a gift received en route for his prophecies and talismans. He is wearing three jellabas, one over the other: one from the herdsmen, of a carrot color; one from the marauders, of the color of a jackal; and one for battle days or the fantasia, black. I agree that makes many yards of wool for one man to wear in a temperature of ninety-five degrees."

Suddenly serious, he went to the dervish and patted him on the shoulder, murmured a few words and then came back to Beatrice.

"To what do I owe the honor of your visit, Madame?"

"Something serious, Monsieur, and difficult to explain to you in a moment."

"Do not allow the dervish to worry you, Madame. They are preparing fried eggs with tomatoes for him. Love for fried eggs will delay the entrance of Mohammed into Gehenna which is his Paradise; but it will help to-day in making him patient."

The professor led Beatrice toward the house.

The noted Arabist, an old cavalier who lacked only the burnous and the guennour, was renewing his gaiety and youthful carriage in the presence of this ravishing woman who while walking was digging holes in the sand with her parasol. He did not know what she would ask, but he did know that she would never ask enough. Venus counted a new conquest.

They entered the Moorish house which retained the shade between its thick walls. In the interior court three cloth-covered armchairs were waiting near a low table littered with pipes, books and riding-whips. Near by was a pool in which a fountain purled continuously like a mechanical bird. There was nothing pedantic or skimped in the home of this savant, booted like a soldier, will-

ing to help mendicants or sinners. Beatrice closed her eyes for several seconds, enjoying the peace, then straightened herself.

"I am a little embarrassed, Monsieur, knowing only your name, and coming for the first time to your house, to ask you a favor . . ."

The graybeard encouraged her with a fine smile.

"I know, Monsieur," continued Beatrice, "that you are acquainted with one of my former officers, Captain Franqueville. On his account I have a request which is painful to me. . . ."

She was fumbling for words, but before the sympathetic eyes which confronted her she emptied the sack of her conscience: the condemnation of Franqueville, ratified by herself, her tardy investigation, her scruples on discovering what sort of man it concerned and her desire to repair the damage.

The professor listened without interrupting. Beatrice concluded:

"Having sought Captain Franqueville in vain at Place Isabelle and finding his house in ruins, I came here. Captain Serres, one of his friends,

promised me your welcome, Monsieur Masseret; he forgot to tempt me by the welcome of your marvelous garden."

"You find very easily, Madame, the road to hearts."

"I am sincere. I have visited all the countries of flowers: California, Japan, the Riviera, the enchanted fields which Switzerland spreads at the feet of her glaciers, and I have seen nothing comparable to your garden, believe me. . . . Now, dear Monsieur, please help me to make the acquaintance of your friend or be my interpreter with him."

Pigeons were alighting on the terrace. Masseret approached Beatrice and said gravely:

"Madame, may God help you. I am very happy for Franqueville, but it will take more than one day for you to do him justice. Your goodness will have to make provision for patience."

"Then, Monsieur, you must take my place."

"I could do that, Madame, if Franqueville had not told me once all about his past, making me swear not to return to the subject."

"He seems to me to do everything to discourage good-will. Mine can not last for ever."

The professor slowly raised his eyes toward Beatrice who flushed.

"Franqueville is a suspicious fellow, difficult to make friends with; I would not even to-day be sure that I have succeeded. But he has some excuse. He spent his youth in an old house in the Cévennes several times set on fire by the king's dragoons, and his family included a dozen preachers. All of this does not make the spirit supple. Do you know, Madame, what old Doctor Franqueville, whom I judge to be dry as a heron and black as a Saracen, said after this *Sémillante* affair? . . . 'I no longer have a child! I repeat after the Apostle Saint John: "Murderers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."' And he closed his doors on his son, guilty, according to him, of homicide, seeking to discover the truth even less than the officers of your court! You see the fanatics of the Cévennes are not worth much more than our neighbors, their relatives, the Riffs."

Beatrice's fingers beat a crisp measure on her armchair.

"I feel very small before this conception of morality. All of it is far from my comprehension!"

Her lower lip protruded disdainfully.

"How did you become acquainted with this strange fellow, Monsieur Masseret?"

The professor's eyes, with the attention of a hunter, did not leave the young woman.

Franqueville, he explained, on landing at Oran with very little money, had learned that a Frenchman, superintendent on the docks, was going to give up his place because he couldn't get along with the poverty-stricken dock-hands. Seeing there a chance for work he had sought out the professor who had hastily crammed him with a few rudiments of Arabic. That was all. There was something else which Beatrice guessed: the camaraderie uniting two officers, two leaders prematurely in retirement. Masseret had been a military interpreter. Summoned to occupy the chair at Oran, he had become, in spite of himself, a famous

Arabist. The Collège de France called him; the Académie des Sciences Morales beckoned to him from afar, waving a beautiful gown embroidered with gold. Amédée Masseret preferred his garden by the sea to the chair of Renan and his chats with Mohammed ben Slimane, the dervish, to all their academic discourse.

He excused himself, leaving Beatrice alone a moment.

"Madame, be good enough to wait for me. I am going to see what has become of my dervish."

He returned in a few minutes.

"Everything is going well; the fried eggs are following one another and the magic charm is working."

"You love this holy man."

Masseret began to eulogize the dervish. Won by him to the French cause, Mohammed ben Slimane, at the risk of his life, had become the obscure apostle of an ideal which he scarcely understood. In turn marabout, beggar, seller of talismans and mender of sandals, Mohammed had endured the worst hardships. This scrupulous

Mussulman had the passion of the first Christians for martyrdom.

"But," said the professor abruptly, "we were speaking of another martyr."

He came back to Franqueville. If Beatrice wished to accomplish a good deed, she must stay at Oran a few days longer, give up the idea of a direct proposition which would be refused, assume a borrowed name and inspire confidence in Franqueville first of all.

"A woman like you, Madame, ought to know so well how to unravel the knots that hurt."

She made a gesture of impatience. That was asking too much of her; her intention was to act as a clement judge and not as a suppliant. They were silent.

The bell tinkled, sounding thin and distant.

"You will have to decide, Madame," said the savant getting up. "Here is the captain."

Beatrice likewise sprang up.

"If you please, to Monsieur Franqueville I shall be Madame Meillan," she said in a very low voice.

Masseret eagerly clasped the young woman's

hand and carried it to his lips. Then he straightened himself and, seeing the anxiety in the green eyes, said:

"Don't be regretful already. Everything is all right, Princess."

This time he had used her title. He advanced toward the garden, and Beatrice followed slowly. At the top of the seven steps appeared Franqueville. The only time that Beatrice had seen him was in a dim light with just a hazy profile visible. Now his face surprised her because it was handsomer than she had thought. He seemed taller than she remembered him. But she had not time to look at him long. Something was constricting her throat: the satisfaction of doing a kindness had, then, so much power! Beatrice felt tenderly about herself, about the justice that she would render.

Captain Franqueville while walking was chatting pleasantly with the little servant, his features, which Beatrice had imagined hard and firm, relaxed at finding again this marvelous garden and its tall palms. So this victim pursued by a somber

fate could be happy, could smile. Franqueville approached the professor with long steps, but suddenly he slackened his pace and all joy died in his face; he had seen a woman.

"Franqueville," said Masseret impetuously, "come, let me present you to Madame Meillan."

Franqueville bowed without seeing the armchair that his friend offered him, and Beatrice did not venture to extend her hand, feeling suddenly extremely tired. Masseret had seized Franqueville by the shoulders and pushed him toward the chair near Beatrice.

"Concepcion will bring us something cool. Sit down and rest."

"Don't go to any trouble for me, my dear friend," he said; "I came just to get news of you. I must go back to the port."

He had not even looked at Beatrice. She wanted to make him notice her. But the eyes of Masseret, fixed on hers, restrained her.

"Madame Meillan will be in Oran for several days," said the professor.

"A very few days," corrected Beatrice quickly.

"The things of the sea interest her, and I should be obliged if you would show her the port."

Franqueville's gray eyes at last were raised toward Beatrice.

"Certainly, it would be a pleasure."

He had a moving voice, a voice which seemed apart from him.

"If he defended himself with that voice," thought Beatrice, "how could those imbeciles convict him?"

It was no longer at him she was angry, but at those who had permitted his conviction. The cooling drinks arrived. No one sat down. Beatrice took a hasty sip, replaced her glass and said:

"I shall leave you to your friends, Monsieur Masseret."

Then feeling that this brusk departure was rude, she added:

"I am going back to my hotel, to miss your house all the more. I shall hope for a word from you to-morrow morning."

"I shall come myself, Madame, if you will allow me."

Beatrice bowed slightly to each of the two men, then, with her graceful walk, crossed the garden, preoccupied for the first time in her life with what those left behind were thinking of her.

V

THE toneless voice of her maid announced to Beatrice about eleven o'clock that a gentleman was down-stairs, saying that he had an appointment with Madame. Beatrice dressed without haste; she knew that the professor was coming but she was angry with him for having delayed her departure. She had spent the evening before on her balcony, lonesome and blue, irritated by disturbing thoughts. Since Franqueville appeared to be a man determined to ask nothing, accept nothing, she had decided to offer nothing. A proud man who could see nothing in the world but his own pride; a lover of psalms who was setting himself up on the pedestal of his misfortune! In the presence of stevedores of all colors the former officer had quickly forgotten the usages of society.

This was the first time that any man—much less one she had come to save—had treated Beatrice

with insulting indifference. Professor Masseret had exhibited the grace and politeness of an old man who salutes Beauty as his first goddess. Even the dervish at sight of her had pulled down the hood of his jellaba so as not to be led into temptation. But Franqueville had turned his head. What did it matter to her? She slipped into a light golf skirt and a silk sweater, rapidly rubbed some powder on her face, combed her hair without a glance at the mirror, resolved to add nothing to please any one, and while perfuming herself through habit went down to the outdoor world, the heat, the dust and the boredom that she, like a fool, had inflicted on herself.

In the lobby, a stupid place with no adornment save a few sad plants, she offered Professor Masseret a cocktail which he refused, taking instead a mint and water. He told her that she would be expected by Franqueville at four o'clock on the wheat dock. She drew a hostile breath. There was something menacing and rarefied about the air which promised a miserable afternoon.

"I came especially to suggest that I accompany

you because the corner where Franqueville works is hard to find." He was afraid that she would refuse at the last moment. She took pleasure in making him suffer a little.

"No, dear Monsieur, rest in your beautiful garden; the victim will go alone to the sacrifice."

He looked contrite; she laughed and invited him to lunch with her in spite of the heat of the hotel. At the table he talked of the South, of his travels, of the Mussulman problem and of the culture of jasmine. They did not part until the hour of the siesta. Just the same Masseret had gained a day.

At three-thirty the negro, Salem, brought for Beatrice a victoria, equipped with a white parasol and drawn by a small horse. The equipage jogged along the Boulevard d'Orléans which seemed to have freshly painted the green façades of its bars and the blue shops of its vegetable venders to salute the passage of this lovely woman and this African sun. Then she was abandoned like a lost soul on the monstrous, groaning docks squeezed between the sharp rocks of the fort of Santa Cruz and the mountain of the Lions.

However, she had time to orient herself in this corner, the only quiet corner in the port, where the craft of the Spanish fishermen dozed and the barge offices clustered, and where the silly Swiss châlet of the Nautical Club flaunted itself on its wooden balcony. It was an almost rural spot with its crates of early fruits and vegetables, bales of esparto grass and vegetable fiber. But Beatrice was not there to admire the tomatoes and artichokes; she was there to meet the ex-captain, Franqueville, superintendent on the wheat dock—the personalized force behind those distant clouds of dust mounting to the sky like columns of fire.

"Come on, now! Courage!" thought Beatrice.

With the resolution which doubled her strength when she wanted something, she advanced to the conquest. The road was not blessed with sweet odors. To reach the wheat dock, she had to negotiate many dark and sticky pools which befouled the ground. She was aware of the scent of musk floating in the air. Beatrice, like almost all women, had an aversion to wine, red wine especially. The captain of the *Venus* had told her that Oran

was a storehouse for wine. Now as she waded, half frightened, through its close, fecundating sunglare, the storehouse seemed determined to prevent her passing. Its thousands of casks, lined up along the way in hostile ranks, raised against her their fortress of staves. And all this was rolling, slipping, bumping up into trucks and barges, under the supervision of guards in gray blouses armed with note-books and wearing the colonial helmets.

What impressed Beatrice was the cadence of the work which carried men and things in the same movement, a pathetic symphony, full of grandeur. Everything was advancing, hurried, crowded, without rest, toward victory. Beatrice, Princess Doriani, in the midst of all this seemed quite insignificant, uninteresting, a swallow on the field of battle. Moreover, here it did not matter who one was, or whether one was ugly or beautiful; the chief concern was simply to get out of this hell without being carted to the hospital. She barely escaped disaster, for suddenly she found herself surrounded by a contingent of casks in the middle

of an arena. Standing in a truck, two men were unloading hogsheads, sending them down two wooden runways, leading from the back of the truck to the ground. In descending they rolled slowly, held by a chain, but reaching the *quai*, they were endowed with mad speed and one of the casks charged Beatrice like a savage bull. Seeing it in time, she met the onslaught, alert, leaping from right to left in terror, without a single one of the men who were responsible for the maneuver seeming to notice that a woman was passing.

Exhausted, her heart pounding, she hastened to escape from this wharf, said to belong to Senegal—a country which she knew well and where she had been otherwise received—and pass on to the kingdom of wheat. When she arrived there, the symphony, modulating its tone, changed into minor. There all sound was deadened: the muffled impact of the sacks, stifled thumps of footsteps, interminable chains of men, dog-tired, in an incessant going to and fro between the vessels in dock and the fabulous dunes of Oranaise wheat, the yellow and gleaming dunes of grain. Beatrice

entered a golden cloud. Above her, thousands, hundreds of thousands of sacks, piled up like biscuits, erected their pyramids; hillocks of barley rising from the ground looked like enormous stacks of amber beads.

Their eyes protected by cardboard vizors, their feet swathed in rags, short-jacketed Spaniards, Moroccans, Arabs, and negroes from the Soudan removed the grain with large wooden scoops or carried the sacks to the barges or toward the scales of the jobbers at a brisk donkey trot.

It was while looking after a line of these beasts of burden that, by chance, Beatrice discovered Franqueville. She saw two high piles of wheat sacks several yards apart over which two old ship's planks served for a roof; this was the shelter of the superintendent. Before her was a weighing machine. By it stood the former officer, his shirt open, his face baked under the colonial helmet, severe, absorbed, leading this army of pariahs with the same authority, the same gravity, the same strict air that he must have worn on his ship, stopping in passage the sacks short in weight and

speeding the others toward the vessels. He appeared neither sad nor tired; he was merely doing his duty. With what fierce grandeur, thought Beatrice, this man accepted his fate. Decidedly, there was nothing little in him, not even despair. Rejected by his blood brothers and by civilization, he was nobler in his misery than those who had condemned him. His very dignity was a taunt.

Beatrice approached Franqueville without attracting his attention until she was beside him. Only then he raised his head. It was an instant before he recognized her; he was returning from afar—God only knows from what purgatory. Beatrice flushed. He had forgotten her. In the scheme of his day she was forgotten as the thing least important, the most negligible. He did not even recall her face. His non-recognition lasted only the quarter of a second; he was apologizing already. But that quarter of a second weighed heavily upon the pride of Princess Doriani. She drew back, her eyes still upon him.

With a mechanical gesture he wiped his forehead as one wipes a wound; then, rolling down his

sleeves, and fastening his collar, he took his white coat down from a peg. It was an old coat belonging to a uniform, but now it had no insignia.

"Pardon me a moment, Madame," he said; "I must tell my employer."

At some distance out in the sun, a farmer, dressed in his Sunday best, with a rough red face and a gendarme's vigorous mustache, was picking up grains of barley and sifting them from one big hand to the other, like precious stones. He was Prosper Huguet, a former planter of Misserghine, now a famous wheat broker. The good man was worth fifteen millions, had four automobiles, in extravagant colors, an ignorant wife whom he dared not show and a palace in the city where he dared not live, so intimidated was he by the mirrors, the pictures and the decorations. He was happy only on his estate and on the wharves, before the handsome edifice of wheat, on this carpet of grain, his grain. Wheat was for him God Himself. At the farm, upon entering his granaries, he piously removed his hat and compelled his domestics to take off their shoes as at the threshold of the mosque.

A while ago, he had knelt on the ground to admire more closely the wheat spread around. He might have been taken for a fanatic at prayer; he bore on his face the same ecstasy. He listened to Franqueville, frowning.

"Ah, yes! That woman of whom you were telling me. Go ahead, but be quick about it!"

He, no more than the others, had taken the trouble to look at Beatrice.

Surly, obviously disgruntled, he came to the shelter and took Franqueville's place at the scales.

"Be quick about it!"

"Monsieur Masseret," said Franqueville, returning to Beatrice, "told me that you would like to see the port. Is there any part which interests you particularly?"

Strict, polite, he waited with a guide's impersonality.

"Just go ahead," she said. "I will ask questions as we go."

She began to walk nervously, measuring the uselessness of this new effort. What could she say, after all? Toss a pardon casually to such a man

as this! They spoke two different languages; the words which she could use would not reach their goal. Nevertheless, she was sure now that she had committed an atrocious injustice and that it would be impossible for her to live tranquilly without having repaired it. This Franqueville could not be understood by his chiefs—she knew them! His soul was too high. This soul she had surprised in his eyes, at a moment when he was off-guard, yesterday and to-day, when they had met.

She walked on without coming to a decision, asking, at hazard, stupid banal questions to which he replied as to a child. And suddenly she felt that she could not go farther. She saw an iron mooring-block, and sat down on it. On the water, almost at her feet, barges in a row were following the rise and fall of the waves without regard to the walls of sacks built up by swarms of men who labored under the spur of two words that split the air like hammer blows—"*Hoo*" (halt) and "*Aréa*" (go ahead)—barked out relentlessly by the black foremen, whose tall indolent figures towered and threatened.

Quite close to her an old Senegalese in tatters began to toss bits of bread to those bundles of rags who were still more miserable than he, and who caught them greedily in the air. The old negro laughed and showed his yellow teeth, which made one think of a horse.

Never had Beatrice looked around her with the eyes that were hers to-day; never had she seen until this afternoon the implacable injustice of the world and of things. Clasping her hands hard, she murmured:

"How sad life is! *Mon Dieu,* why is life so sad?"

This was not addressed to Franqueville; it gushed from her heart. And he for the first time made a movement toward her, very slight, but she felt it. She raised her head and saw that at last he was looking at her. He was regarding her, moreover, with amazement, astounded that she should understand the sadness, the fatality hanging over all these poor existences; understand it and be moved by it.

To most of the strangers visiting the port, the

spectacle of this wealth and activity was a reassuring sight. On the gangways which led from the barges to the grain, the poverty-stricken wharf-rats seemed, in spite of their burdens, to be dancing in the sun. Did not their cardboard vizors, held on by string, give the laborers the comic aspect of a carnival crowd? The singing hammers of the ship's carpenters, the fragrance from the elms and the American redwoods, which some Neapolitan workmen were steaming at the fire to make more supple: did these not remind one of ancient pagan festivals of the sea? And finally, the violent colors of the farm machinery piled upon the wharves: blue harrows folded like iron bedsteads, canary yellow wine-presses, ploughs with green shares and red handles from America, labeled Ford and Deering, the brilliant turbans of the negro chieftains with their copper rings and earrings—did not all this glorify the animal joy of Africa, phrenetic and sensual?

But she, this singular woman, too well dressed in her elegant simplicity and too beautiful to belong there, she had understood! Like himself,

she knew that all these unfortunates, marching with that steady balance which seemed the pendulum of their misery, were condemned through eternity to labor as beasts of burden. She had penetrated the revolting game of civilization which places one above, the other beneath, without any choice. Under the golden veil she had discerned the irremediable human sadness. The iron curtain was raised from Franqueville's eyes. He discovered Beatrice. Without taking his gaze from her, he murmured:

"Yes, for these men, for most men, life is a hell."

He explained that death was trailing them in this work which appeared so peaceful. Accidents were frequent. Perhaps one of these unfortunates, worn out, would fall asleep in the hold of a ship instead of going out at the rest period, and when work started again, if the forgotten wretch did not awake, his comrades, not realizing that he was there in the dark, might entomb him under the sacks dumped through the hatchways.

There was silence; then he continued, his eyes fixed on the porters:

"And those fellows you see there are not the most wretched. They will eat this evening, broken, aged, but they will eat. There are worse, those who are not fit for work, who can only wait for death."

He was not talking of himself. He made not the slightest allusion to his own affairs. It was others he pitied. Beatrice rose abruptly.

"I don't want to see any more of the port! Moreover you were told to hurry, and I know that I am *de trop* here. I thank you, Monsieur Franqueville."

She was about to leave, but she stopped again. This time, they looked at each other frankly.

"If one were to suggest to you," she said, "employment more worthy of you, less painful . . ."

He interrupted her without smiling.

"I do not see, Madame, who could propose that to me. I know no one. Besides, such serious reasons keep me here now that it would be impossible for me to accept."

That "now" struck Beatrice like a blow. But she refrained from asking a question. She realized

that in her emotion, the least word would betray her. And she no longer wanted to betray herself. . . .

They shook hands like two friends and each plunged into the golden cloud alone.

VI

Returning to the hotel, Beatrice threw herself on her bed and in a confused feeling of disgust, anxiety and overwhelming heat fell asleep. The raucous scream of a saxophone, crashing against the glass cage of the first floor, aroused her with a start. It was dark. She got up, seized her hat and went out precipitately, without even stopping to look at herself in the mirror.

When she reached the professor's house, a lambent moonlight was streaming from the sky; each gleaming flower looked like a cup held out to the night to receive some magic philter. And there was about Beatrice something so pathetic that the old teacher, who had lived ardently and to whom the memory of many sweet, dead emotions gave an unlimited clairvoyance, was shocked by it.

He did not ask the reason for her visit at this

hour, which was not the hour for visits even with an old celibate. He took Beatrice's hand gently and led her to the chair where she had sat the evening before, near the fountain which still sang. He waited for her to speak. To greet her, he might have drawn on his store of beautiful Koranic phrases, but he knew the price of vain words. Then Beatrice made an effort, in a voice which was still choked and hesitant:

"I am leaving to-morrow, Monsieur Masseret."

She was silent a moment, like some one who looks for a lost object and is unable to think of anything else. She continued, listening to herself as if to a stranger:

"I came to tell you . . ."

Then recovering herself, she went on in a burst of sincerity:

"Because I know that it interests only you, you alone, and I could not keep it to myself!"

He watched her attentively, but with eyes so gentle that she felt his heart open to her trouble.

"I have done what you asked," she continued in a low tone. "I saw Captain Franqueville and I

realized that anything I might offer him would only add to the offense that I have already committed against him. I have acted badly enough without adding to that a lie, a comedy which could only end in tragedy. To-morrow I shall return to the *Venus*. I shall go away. Perhaps through a third party I can help without wounding this man who does not want help. Here I can do nothing."

She laughed bitterly.

"By a singular turn of affairs," she added, "I find myself playing a poor rôle, a lamentable rôle. I was too proud of my own; it was too fine."

Masseret took the hands which she abandoned in the fervent need of sympathy. The understanding of this wise old man was like a warmth about her. He regarded these beautiful slim hands, hands without weakness, whose long thumbs indicated strong will; he examined them as if he were reading some secret there. Then he raised his head.

"Did you come here only for that?"

"I do not understand."

"I mean that the Princess Doriani, who counts so many friends in this world, would not suddenly

start out on such an adventure, all alone, if she did not feel, wittingly or not, a great weariness, a compelling distaste for the society in which she moved."

"You are a very subtle man, dear Professor. But even admitting that you are right, that would not change things."

Sitting beside Beatrice, his face near hers, the old man clasped her fingers firmly.

"On the contrary, that would influence things a great deal, because in abandoning the struggle you will not find the relief that you are now seeking, my child."

"And here?"

"Here you can do, whatever you may think, a great deal of good. A woman like you can do anything."

Beatrice felt the blood rising to her face, and her voice grew husky.

"Haven't you looked at me? Do you know nothing of my life? Has my reputation taught you nothing that you should build on me so pure a dream?"

She slowly withdrew her hands, placed them on her temples and leaned back with a sigh. Suddenly she bent toward the watchful eyes which were seeking to read her.

"Listen: nothing that has ever come near Beatrice Doriani has been pure, and nothing ever will be. If I stayed here, either that man might fall in love with me, and I perhaps with him—which would be worse—or, as soon as he learned my name, as I now know him he would treat me as the cheapest of women. And that would not make things better."

She clasped her head between her hot palms. The confidence that she had had in herself had for hours been slipping away. She saw Masseret get up; his steps scraped on the sand. A pigeon cooed on the terrace; a whiff of perfume was borne on the soft breeze. The professor stopped before Beatrice.

"God condemned the angels for their pride. You, and also that damned Franqueville—it's pride that holds you both; it's pride that is ruining you. . . .

"Ah! let me speak now; it's my turn. Like all women who are too beautiful, you have lived close to passion; but whether you like it or not, it was a noble sentiment that brought you here. It is the same sentiment that will keep you here and will banish all that your imagination makes you fear."

She felt that she must discourage him at any price.

"Dear Monsieur," she said, "consider. I came here with an exact purpose which I can not carry out. If I am obstinate, as you say, it is because I could not stay here five days without some one learning who I am, or some man on my yacht committing an indiscretion, or some one in my past coming here to pursue me!"

"You are right. Yet it is only necessary for you to be kind."

His shining eyes held a little of the anxiety of pilgrims in prayer. He was waiting to see that his instinctive faith in her was not a delusion. Beatrice had not the strength to disappoint him. He guessed this and continued with renewed ardor:

"Be kind; the man is worth the trouble. Be-

sides, do you know what happened to him when you had just left him?"

He related that, returning to the docks, the ex-officer had found around the *Prophète*, an old vessel of the Compagnie Paquet which carried wheat to Morocco, a howling pack of porters. With Franqueville absent, they had failed during a rest period to count the crew working in the hold, and a certain José Perez, a notorious drunkard, had remained inside.

Beatrice trembled.

"Yes, I understand," she murmured. "Captain Franqueville explained to me what could happen in such a case."

The professor did not relinquish his gaze. The dock-hand lost in the hold had found himself in a prison from which it was impossible to gain release, at least without superhuman effort or terrible risk on the part of the rescuers, as the slightest displacement of the sacks might start an avalanche. Once more Franqueville's conscience had worked against him. Believing himself responsible for the accident, and knowing the man to be his neighbor,

he had borrowed a Moroccan's turban, made a mask of it, and had had himself lowered into the hold by a tackle. In this necropolis of grain, no call or groan guided him; the man must be buried at the bottom, and Franqueville was in danger of being buried too if he insisted on looking for him.

"But you know him now," said Masseret. "He kept saying to himself, he told me a while ago when I went to see him, 'A life saved for a life taken; I must pay my debt.' And he persisted."

"Hurt?" asked Beatrice, her breath short.

"Slightly. His head. Already half asphyxiated when he had found the man, he was knocked against the tackle as they drew him up."

"And the other?"

"The other, a broken arm and internal injuries; but it is hoped he will recover, although he's not worth the trouble."

"And all that," said Beatrice slowly, "happened because I visited that cursed port. That is, by my——"

A contraction of her throat cut off the last word. Beatrice began to hate the destiny which, up till

now, had been so kind to her. What obscure fatality now connected her life with Franqueville's? Why must there be always between them blood, violence? She suddenly stood up. The professor got up too, and in silence they went toward the enchanted garden.

"Don't exaggerate your responsibility," said Masseret. "Life is wicked, that is all."

She gazed at him steadily; the pallor cast upon her by the moon and her emotion sculptured a beauty so poignant that the professor stopped, wordless.

"No, that is not all," she said.

She went a few steps farther, then, near the gate, turned.

"Please be good enough to let me know how Captain Franqueville gets along. I'll go to-morrow to see this Perez."

That meant she would stay. She went out; proceeded a little way feverishly. In a moment she heard some one running behind her, and the professor rejoined her.

"Excuse me," he said. "I was so worried; but

you know that I am not going to let you go back alone."

She smiled at him gently and placed her hand lightly on the arm he offered with old-time courtly grace.

VII

José Perez, like Franqueville, his neighbor, lived in la Calère—but not in the Street of Suicides—and about ten o'clock the next morning Beatrice was ready to undertake again an assault of the street with the stairs. She had refused to think about it, hoping for the best, but resigned to the worst. She was under the spell of the fatalism of the Orient.

Beatrice was racing across the lobby as if it were a railroad station when who should appear but the captain of the *Venus*, a fantastic shadow silhouetted against the blinding light of the street outside. Before this striped bulwark Beatrice hid her annoyance under the smile of a woman of the world and went back into the hotel.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, Captain?"

Kadour, the black night-porter, pushed forward armchairs eagerly. Beatrice sat down, the cap-

tain remaining at attention. This performance disconcerted Salem, the bell-boy Moustique, and Kadour himself, although with Christians one may expect anything. Among the hotel flunkies, Beatrice was the subject of passionate discussion. An intriguing mystery hovered around this legendary lady, a guest at three hundred francs a day, wine included, without counting the fabulous tips distributed like cigarettes. Moustique had learned from Kadour, who had it from Antonia, the Genevan chambermaid, that the guest in 34 displayed on her mantel gold toilet articles engraved with a crown. The name of Meillan must hide the incognita of some great lady breaking her restraint, or perhaps one of those passionate mistresses of the South, one of those absurd and charming cases of the Soudanese aiguë, a malady about which the hotel staff could have furnished useful information to the colonial section of the Academy of Medicine.

Less than two months before a young Hollandaise, svelte and fresh as a tulip, had left the hotel without a guide in a plain little Citroën to go to

the Tanezrouft, of all places. White women, since they cut their hair, stop at nothing. However, neither the tulip nor the machine had returned, and the sands of the South, guardians of thousands of secrets, had not even deigned an answer to the inquiries of the government and the Dutch consul. They knew of other victims. Moustique had feared in his heart that Madame Meillan had the idea of lengthening the list, but upon the arrival of Captain Allegret, the said Moustique, after having cast a sidelong glance at Kadour, returned to saner thoughts. He held the key to the enigma. A love-story more banal than a street in Oran. However, the captain's attitude, careful, respectful, placed an interrogation point under the noses of these varicolored psychologists.

Ordinarily, without paying any attention to the grimaces of disgust or the scornful glances of the sons of Mohammed, the Romanists, male and female, who met at the Continental could not wait to be alone to rub cheeks and nuzzle. Scandalous clothes, repugnant faces! But the officer and Madame Meillan had the noble attitude of movie

princes; they were respectable people. As a matter of fact, Captain Allegret was probably displaying so much ceremony this morning because in one of the wicker armchairs sat an old pasha, in brilliant burnous, with tall guennour, the order of the Legion of Honor about his neck, one foot freed of its sandal and clasped in his hand.

"Princess," began Allegret.

Beatrice stopped him with an authoritative gesture. "Don't call me 'Princess'; here, I am Madame Meillan."

The captain, reddening like a midshipman, apologized. To-day he had only annoying things to report. At Mers-el-Kébir, the sailors under the orders of the—of Madame Meillan, were beginning to get bored. The diversions of the Café of the Fleet and of fishing by night with torches were exhausted and the hospitable houses of Oran were too close; he was afraid of trouble.

"This I shall not permit," interrupted Beatrice coldly. "Make an example of the first man who makes a break. Keep them at Mers-el-Kébir. I don't want to see one of my men here."

The captain began to get red again, and his neck showed signs of distress. But Beatrice was not affected. The business on which she had come was dragging; no one was more eager to leave than she. Although it was eleven o'clock, she did not ask the captain to lunch but requested him in a suave voice to set an example by returning on board. He assented and departed, leaving a stack of mail brought from the *Venus*.

She made a difficult mental calculation and decided it would be better to put off the visit to Perez until after the siesta hour. Then with an effort she attacked her correspondence. Nothing especially troublesome. There were papers to sign, naturally urgent, sent by the Mediterranean Company. These could wait. And three letters from the abandoned trio. She skimmed through the one from de Manneville, written in a sparkling vein which amused her. Four tragic pages from Gonzalo, funnier still. But she took her time before the dignified script that covered a thick sheet from the English Embassy. In this letter impatient complaints and actual distress were mixed with comical

considerations on the subject of trunks, valises and customs duties. Life in Paris without Beatrice was becoming odious to the naval attaché; Lord Wendley had asked to rejoin his only friend, the war cruiser, *Prince of Wales*, under the rocks of Gibraltar. And he was awaiting the order from the Admiralty. That sentence wrinkled Beatrice's forehead. Gibraltar, that was very near Oran. Worried, she went out to the hotel dining-room. But before an omelet with tomatoes she recalled that a man always puts his profession before his love; the cruiser, *Prince of Wales*, would certainly outrival the Princess Doriani.

VIII

At la Calère the first *yaouled* she met directed Beatrice. The dock-hand, José Perez, lived in Rue Madrid and his name alone provoked a laugh. The gamin had laughed because the former miner of the Sierra Nevada, atheist, radical, lover of anisette, who drew out his knife as nonchalantly as his plug of tobacco, was the most comical of all the sons of Andalusia. At all the festivals he distinguished himself, but especially at the Mardi Gras. On that day his hatred of tyranny and religion made of him a great satirical poet. It was he who for years had interred King Carnival, a glorious hoax! He was a sight to behold at the head of his burlesque troupe, with his shirt over his pantaloons, his violet robe and his miter of fancy paper. A lord of this world, a head of the Apostolic Roman Church, he was the Church itself, Perez, the dock-hand. Behind Perez marched the children of the choir, also in *chemises* and

carrying wooden crosses. Then came Carnival, a huge manikin stretched on a donkey cart. Bread crusts formed his crown and bottles were laid tenderly beside the corpse. Farther off followed the family, figures draped in black and chanting impious hymns to a maddening accompaniment of old pots and pans.

They would proceed to dump the dead sovereign head over heels into the ravine, El Ain, near the Place des Quinconces, which on other days is traversed by the actual dead with a little more decency. Coming back, the procession would stop at the saloons and cafés of the Boulevard d'Orléans and the Place de la Perle and usually escort the master of ceremonies, still in his robe, drunk as a sponge and lyric as an accordion, to his home in la Calère.

But, *Mère de Dieu*, what was going on to-day on this thoroughfare? Before each wash-tub yawning in the sun, each pot of basil airing in the window, each cook-stove blazing at the door, each pullet held by a string to the hearth waiting the inevitable frying-pan, arose cries of indignation,

sighs laden with bile, or invocations to the saints with whom each of the matrons maintained personal relations, some to cure their sterility (Saint Christopher) and others to befriend their pregnancy (Saint Ramon) and others, so many others, for reasons just as vital. To-day these invocations were not breathed in behalf of the drunkard, but for his poor wife, the courageous Maria, and his numerous babies.

In Rue Madrid, blue, pink, green and yellow with its gay pennons of clothing, Beatrice needed no directions.

Perez' door was guarded by a group of women, some blubbering, some derisive, all awaiting news.

"So that's where he lives," thought Beatrice, who by a curious transference of thought was thinking of Franqueville, Perez' neighbor.

A moment she stood undecided, trying to discover behind the yellow door and the closed windows of the superintendent some sign of life; then she abruptly shouldered the curious crowd aside and entered the Perez house. One somber room; dark forms, a yellow brat in a yellow cradle; about

a round table spotted by a candle, children with mournful faces were looking at an empty plate, and, at the back, a white delirious mass in an alcove decorated by a crucifix and a masonic star.

Beatrice advanced with the assurance that money gives everywhere, in spite of her shame at having unwittingly heaped a little more misfortune on this household.

"Madame Perez?"

A face, honest and rough as if carved from wood, looked up, worried and distrustful of the visitor, for money makes fearful those who have none. It was Maria Perez. In Spanish—the lessons of Gonzalo Real had not been wasted—Beatrice spoke of a Red Cross committee to which she belonged. She would provide for all expenses; nothing must be spared to save the wounded man. Stupefied, the woman began to sob, then she seized Beatrice's hand and carried it to her wet face.

"Show me the paper the doctor left," requested Beatrice.

The prescription was there but no medicines at

all. She sent a neighbor to get them and at the same time bread, wine and meat. Then she made the curious crowd get out.

"They are devouring the air from the sick-room," she said to Maria Perez. "You can not save him with so many people about."

The room emptied, with much crossing and many black eyes rolling. Maria wept as though she had never wept in her life. The accident to Perez had been all her fault, she was sure. The evening before, her dead father—may the Madonna keep him in her sacred care—had appeared begging her to climb barefoot to the Virgin of Santa Cruz in order that he might find eternal rest. Too busy, she had not immediately obeyed the dead and punishment had come.

On his couch, the wounded man moved, looking about with mad eyes which he fixed for an instant on that clear, unknown figure standing near him.

"The sharks are prowling!" he said. "They are prowling around the blood they have spilled."

Beatrice recoiled, her heart pounding; now the sick man was gazing at the ceiling.

"Stop, stop, I tell you; they are rolling, they are crushing me . . . *canaille* . . . bandit of a French captain . . . you want my skin. . . . Bandit!"

He fell back, exhausted.

"It is there that he is hurt the most," said Maria, touching her head. "He talks foolishly, poor fellow. The French captain is Monsieur Franqueville, our neighbor; it was he who pulled him out of the hole, risked his life for him. But he confuses things."

Beatrice could stand no more. Knowing Spanish pride, she spoke of the insurance company which must defray the expense of the accident to the dock-hand and recompense him for his lost time. What she was giving would be a share in advance. To have another bank note accepted she had to promise to come back.

The next day she did return after having for twenty-four hours so conscientiously abhorred herself that she seemed no longer Beatrice. There was more air in the room and something was cooking in a pot over a charcoal stove. They had

opened the window curtains which had been closed the night before as in a death chamber. Beatrice was able to make out all the details of this Noah's ark where children, cats and chickens were all brought up pell-mell under the protection of violently colored saints in black frames and two white Virgins on crowded shelves. The fact is that the celestial protection had fallen short of procuring pardon for the maledictions of the heretic. Every morning the children, the big ones carrying the little ones in their arms, went to the ancient cathedral, the old church of Saint Louis, to kiss the naked feet of Christ and atone for the sins of their father.

At this moment, the blasphemer, quieted by cold compresses, was resting, his sharp profile cut by an old-fashioned mustache. A fine head, noble and strong. Above him on the white wall was fastened his Andalusian hat with its pointed crown and broad velvet brim, a sickle and a curious work made of braided wheat stalks. A sickle, stalks—pathetic symbols of the city of wheat—wheat which everywhere evoked life and thereupon un-

avoidably bore thoughts of death. Wheat had almost killed him, yet this radical who believed in nothing was honoring as a god a bouquet of yellow stalks. Maria intercepted the inquiring glance of the visitor.

Those stalks, she explained, recalled to Perez the time when he was overseer of a farm in Bel-Abbès. He had braided them himself for the mutton festival. On that day the workers on the estates solemnly brought a wreath of stalks to the owner who in exchange gave them a sheep. After the gift came the celebration, dancing, guitars and anisette, and Perez never did anything by halves. He had drunk several glasses too much as usual and a Moroccan had provoked him to quarrel. He left the fellow on the spot half dead. The next day Perez, whose anarchistic tendencies did him more harm than good, was dismissed from the farm.

"And we had to start all over again," concluded the wife. "There were only five of us at that time, and all that we brought away after those three months of work was the wreath of wheat."

As if he had heard and as if in the depths of his soul the injury could not be effaced, the sick man began to speak again, under his breath, confiding to some invisible listener what the harangues of public meetings and tracts of propaganda had piled up in his corroded brain.

"You are suffering! You are dying! But it is the fault of the rich, of the robbers who exploit you, poor Spain! Yes, the nobles, the same everywhere. With our blood we pay for their women, their cigars. . . . Vampires! If I had one of them . . . Give me one, just God, that I may burn his entrails!"

Beatrice's fingers were beating a tattoo on the table, and Maria, who was ashamed and was also afraid of losing this lady so helpful, thought she ought to explain. José Perez had worked first of all in Spain in a silver mine of the Sierra Nevada. The owner had left the exploitation of the mine in the hands of a deputy, a merciless agent. In the course of a strike, this man had had José Perez thrown into prison. The duke had backed up his agent and jail had made a rebel of an innocent man.

Beatrice gritted her teeth. Behind each human woe, then, could be found an injustice. Mechanically she said:

"Who was the owner of the mines?"

"The Duke of Almeria, Madame."

Beatrice dropped her head like a criminal. The Duke of Almeria! Gonzalo's father! So her presence to-day was to pay for two. . . .

She boiled water for the bandages, filled a pot and lighted a second bed of coals. She did things awkwardly, stupidly, but she continued with pride, soiling her fingers and cleansing her soul.

It was at this moment that Franqueville entered. He never did anything like other people; he did not even look around him but went straight to Maria Perez near the bed and began to talk to her in a low voice. It was about the insurance. He had attended to it; Maria Perez would not have to worry. There was a gash in his forehead which he had disdained to bandage. He regarded the wounded man with fathomless unpitying eyes: the eyes of a man who has come to consider pain the only natural thing.

"He is still very sick," groaned Maria. "*El Señor Jésus*, how his head torments him! He is angry with every one. You know him, Señor Capitan; there is no place for him on earth!"

On Franqueville's face was an indefinable smile which, however, Beatrice did not find difficult to interpret. It was not only this drunkard who could find no place on earth!

"Happily," continued Maria, "the kind Father has not abandoned me; here is a lady . . ."

Beatrice bent over the water which was beginning to boil as if to read in it her fate, and the fire which was gleaming under it served as an excuse for the fire burning her cheeks.

Already Franqueville was beside her.

"You, Madame, here?"

He bent over Beatrice's face as over a mysterious crucible.

"Monsieur Masseret told me about the accident the same evening. I felt myself responsible and I was glad to do whatever I could to assuage it. Does that astonish you?"

She held out a firm hand which he took this time

without hesitating. He wanted to speak but his lips trembled. He remained standing before Beatrice but his gaze went beyond her. Then mechanically, still remote, he bowed, withdrew a little and went out.

Beatrice turned toward the Spanish woman, stupefied. Then, with the coffee-pot she had just heated still in her hand, she said:

"Come with me, Maria, I'm going to teach you how to make a dressing."

In the adjacent house the door banged like an explosion.

IX

Beatrice returned to the Perez home the next day and the following days. Franqueville likewise called but at different hours. In this game time was passing and the sailors aboard the *Venus* must have begun to gnaw the ship's planks. But Beatrice, for some time now, had been discovering patience and in this patience something uplifting which made her agree to anything, even to daily soiling her hands at the home of Maria Perez. Moreover, this patience was sustained at mild heat by the excellent Masseret who could be found every evening in the little garden by the sea, deliciously intoxicated by the odor of the date palms and by the certainty that Franqueville, worn out by his lonely suffering, would end in yielding. Beatrice passionately desired that hour to come, and no longer desired it only because of her hereditary feeling for justice.

The fifth day Beatrice's blood, which acceler-

ated her movements every time she passed the acid-green door of the ex-officer, urged her still more insistently. Franqueville appeared, tall, straight, immaculate. He advanced toward one of the loveliest and most sought after women in Europe, his steady eyes reflecting not the least emotion. However, in greeting her, his deep voice vibrated with a tone that Beatrice had not noticed before.

"Ah, Madame, you are good! I truly admire your kindness."

The words were said with a somber fervor. So, it was he who was coming to her, and the request of old Masseret, "Be kind!" was beginning to assume the aspect of a prophecy. She opened her eyes wide with an embarrassment scarcely feigned.

"I have always lived far from the poor," she said, "but I am glad that chance has shown me many things since I came here."

"Most people," he replied, "never understand even when they touch misery with their finger-tips. Money is a blind and stupid thing which renders blind and stupid those who have it."

She found no answer. They walked along slowly in the hot twilight of the street. Forsaking his habit of silence Franqueville had begun to talk of people, things about them, the storms, the heat, hurriedly as one who is seeking to relieve himself of a heavy load. Three times, their elbows touching, they traversed the space which separated the two houses. On the fourth turn, two workmen who were passing looked at them inquisitively. Then with one of those abrupt changes like a shift in the wind which Beatrice already knew, Franqueville's face became a mask once more and, excusing himself as if he had suddenly remembered something, he left her and went down toward the harbor.

On the Perez door-step Beatrice turned to watch him. She had seen many men of the sea but never one with this attraction. And on his bare sleeves her fancy replaced the stripes which she had herself torn off. Herself, with her own hand! How could she right that wrong?

The next day, on pushing open the little door at the Perez home, Beatrice thought she was entering a chapel. Perez for the first time was seated on

his bed, protected by white curtains like an altar. Around him, Maria Perez in a silk dress, the children, almost clean, and also Rosita, the eldest daughter—arrived from no-one-knew-where with a young chap, her betrothed, against whom she was tenderly pressing her silk stockings—all seemed to be in prayer. From the man himself more than from his stupendous bedding emanated a real majesty which impressed Beatrice. The face in repose, washed of all traces of alcohol, of all violent thoughts, revealed under the light the forehead of a leader. Hampered by his bandages he bowed toward Beatrice slowly, with a movement full of dignity.

"I wanted to thank you before them all, Madame," he said, detaching each word from the others.

"Don't tire yourself, man," said Maria gently, fearing some word too much.

"Be quiet, woman. Who told you to speak?"

Under the light, the sweat shone on his temples.

"Rest yourself," said Beatrice softly. "I am happy to have been able to help you, that is all."

He shook his head vehemently.

"I want to ask pardon before you all, Señora. Faith has deserted my soul because men have treated me ill. I believe in nothing on earth; the matter is between God and me."

He stopped, took a long breath and continued without Beatrice's being able to quiet him.

"But the wife has told me that I blasphemed before you, that I have insulted every one, you and Señor Francese. And you two have saved my life!"

"That is true," said Maria, beating her breast and kneeling near Beatrice. "May Christ lead you to Paradise!"

"Yes, but at the last possible minute! That is all she can find to say," said Perez with a contemptuous smile. "Excuse her, Madame, for being so foolish. She is kind, but she is stupid. We are all so stupid, ignorant wretches that we are!"

Beatrice took his hand gently. He remained stupefied a moment, then raised to her his Andalusian eyes, full of fire. What he still had to ask of Beatrice was that she be his intermediary with

Franqueville. He was anxious that the captain should hear his apologies before he came again to this house. He had not even thanked him—it all came back to him now—when Franqueville had risked his life to get him out of the hole! He had been drunk still and the wine fumes always made him nasty. But how could he get himself pardoned? Beatrice alone would know what should be said to a man like Monsieur Franqueville. She would understand the fine points of the reconciliation and could tell whether or not Franqueville was pleased.

"I will speak to him," she said, "don't worry. Since you are better, Monsieur Perez, take care of yourself and don't think of anything else."

She was in a hurry to leave, but she had yet to submit to an introduction to the oldest daughter and her fiancé. On this day of convalescence they would celebrate the betrothal; Beatrice must accept a cup of coffee. When finally she made her way to the door, the sick man moved in his bed.

"Don't forget Señor Francese, Madame!"

She repeated her promise, saying to herself with

a sort of anxiety that there was no chance of her forgetting him.

She traversed the dozen yards to the freshly whitewashed door of Franqueville's house and knocked. In doing so she hurt her finger. Was it an omen? The door was opened. An old woman with a leathery face under a bandanna fastened about her head, and a body twisted like a vine, received Beatrice with a smile which displayed one black tooth. The landlady. Beatrice mounted a kind of ladder leading to the lodger's room, a trap ladder which reminded her of the one on the *Venus*. But at the ship's ladder there were always gold stripes to receive her. Gold stripes were now poisoning her life. After she had climbed two flights, she came back down again and asked the old woman to announce her.

Without answering la Parque passed before her. They ascended and came out on the flat roof which topped the little house. In the middle there was a room with the window wide open, through which the sun was streaming quite domestically, lighting an iron bed, two chairs, a trunk, some clothes

hung on nails, and a table. Over this table a man was bent, his head on his arm. Was he asleep?

"Señor," said the old woman, "a lady."

He arose quickly, smoothing back his tousled hair. His eyes were red. It seemed to Beatrice that something was gripping her throat. "It is I; it is all my fault!" She was ready to offer anything, without reservation. But once more she was afraid of those cold eyes.

"Perez has died!" he cried.

Beatrice forced herself to offer her hand calmly.

"Why do you say that?"

The old woman stumbled down the ladder again. For an instant Franqueville forgot that Beatrice's fingers were in his. Then he straightened himself with a dry laugh.

"Because, given the kind of luck I have, I'm surprised that the poor fellow is still here!"

Beatrice shook her head and, to cover her emotion, inspected the room. It was a square room, bare, clean as a ship's cabin and cold as an Anglican chapel. Nothing on the wall, but on the table covered with a light scarf there were several

handsome objects: a cigar box, an ash-tray, a pipe, several books and a woman's portrait in a silver frame, a woman with white hair—doubtless his mother. So in this heart apparently cold as the walls there was a taste for beautiful things, tenderness, and even,—Beatrice read the title of one of the books: *Victory*,—perhaps passion.

"I am sorry," he said, "to receive you in such a place."

His eyes caught hers directly, asking why she had come there. No hypocrisy, no indecision; he had not been confused for a second. Venus was conquered. She felt neither anger nor scorn. She had sought to win his respect in order to gain his confidence, and now it was she who looked up to him. With her knowledge of life she admired his indifference to the allure of a woman like herself, and she felt ready to endure anything, even that disdainful pride, simply to reach the point where she could do him service.

She sat down, wearily crossing her lovely slim legs. "On the contrary, Perez is out of danger," she said, "and it's on his account . . ."

She repeated sympathetically the dock-hand's words; she had come there as an emissary.

"I am astounded;" said Franqueville slowly, "first of all because gratitude is bread with which I have seldom been served. Then . . ."

He stepped through the doorway and with his back to the wall, continued:

"Then, because this wretch ought to curse me instead of thanking me! We should have both been so much better off if we had stayed in the bottom of the hold, relieved properly of life by several tons of wheat. . . . You see . . ."

He passed his hand across his forehead and did not take his gaze from the sea; it seemed as if he were looking at something far away.

"You see, once more I have made an empty gesture!"

Slowly he turned his head toward her, his head only, and Beatrice's heart faltered. She knew that the hour had arrived. He looked at her with wide tormented eyes, then lowering his face, began to speak:

"You have trusted me, you have honored me in

coming here, but I do not want to cheat you of your esteem."

He hesitated a few seconds and then continued:

"I am not even the poor devil whom you must have pitied in the exquisite bounty of your heart. I am a wretch fallen as low as a man can fall. An officer, a seaman, whom they have convicted and dismissed."

When he said these last words Beatrice's eyes sought the shelter of the portrait of that white-haired woman as if she might draw help from her; then they wandered to the spot on the wall against which his shoulders rested.

Not hearing her make a move to go, he continued:

"And I was not condemned merely by my peers or my superiors, but also by a woman to whom money and society have given the place of a man—and who knows how to use it!"

This perilous situation brought Beatrice to herself. She got up. He had uttered a sigh which was more like a moan. Now he came back into the room. There they stood facing each other, in

the hot breeze which raised the curtains, oblivious to everything except themselves.

"I can't tell you more and I know that you will keep secret what I've already confided, but I should have been ashamed not to say this much."

He seemed to await her verdict. She unclenched her teeth painfully.

"And this woman, you must surely hate her?"

"She is not worth it."

He shrugged his shoulders lightly.

"Moreover, a man in my position can no longer hate. It's too big an effort, too useless."

He was silent; then going to the table he offered Beatrice a cigarette. She refused with a gesture. She was terrified. Since he had said: "She is not worth it," she knew that she loved him.

The box of matches was near her, she passed them to him with a hand which she could not control and said:

"I am sorry. But you have my friendship now more than before, and I thank you——"

She could not finish. She felt suddenly weak, but she had the courage to say:

"I know what women are in business, especially in a certain class of society: they are made use of, but they are not consulted about anything important. The person of whom you speak must have been badly advised to act so lightly."

He shook his head and dropped his ash as if in judgment.

"Lightly! No, she is a contemptible creature!"

And suddenly he took her hand and drew her out on the roof.

"Since you did not turn your back on me and leave as I thought you would do, I shall tell you the whole thing. I want you to know all about me, it is so blessed to be able to talk to you . . ."

The grateful look he gave Beatrice tortured her. She began to twist a ridiculous little handkerchief.

"I am not used to talking to women. Years on the sea do not facilitate friendship with women. I do not give the name of friendship to our relations in port, contacts of a day which have always made me ashamed, for in our old Huguenot families they have instilled in us from infancy a respect for woman herself."

He saw with what profound attention she was listening, and he was embarrassed.

"I don't want to pass as a saint, I who am, after all, a criminal!"

He hesitated again, then continued:

"Well, then, here are the facts: for fifteen years I had been with the Mediterranean Company."

Beatrice collected her forces, prepared for the torture which she must endure without a murmur.

"One does not stay with a company so long without feeling a part of it. He respects his employers as a second family. You see, I'm very orthodox! And then, one is proud of them, of his ship, of all their ships; one is part of a grand whole. It was in this state of mind that one morning I left Genoa aboard the *Sémillante* which I commanded. I had on board about four hundred fifty emigrants bound for the Argentine. It was a trying departure in the midst of disorder and tears. I remember an old woman who ran after me gesticulating; she was demanding her mattress. Having human bundles even more cumbersome to look after, I promised to do what I could and thought no

more of it. But when we had cleared the harbor my old friend reappeared and came to kiss my hand; some one had brought back her mattress. That is life; some one is grateful to you for a favor you have not done, while an actual favor remains unrecognized.

"But it was not this old woman who unloosed the drama; hers was over. It was the presence on board of two young Italian women who were going to Rio to work as dressmakers, and a certain Constantin Zarkis, a third-class passenger, marked by the Brazilian police as a white slaver. And this was not hard to believe of him. When I saw him lurking around those two poor girls, I swore I would interfere. It was not my rôle; a captain's rôle consists especially in making time, to save food and fuel, if he wants the felicitations of the company. They told me that in all tones, after the episode, after I had been tried by the Court of Discipline.

" 'Why were you concerning yourself with it?' my judges demanded of me.

"Imbeciles! They should have thought of their

wives, their daughters; those two working girls were just as deserving! They were deserving, for both of them were wretched and weakened by poverty. I wanted to save them at all costs from the temptations of Zarkis. I should have put him in irons."

"Why didn't you!" cried Beatrice.

"A captain is not a policeman. I was counting on the handcuffs of the Rio police."

From a neighboring roof came the sound of a guitar, then a man's voice warm and tender:

> *"Cruce la España rico pais*
> *Que lindas damas se ven alli . . ."*

The song out over the Mediterranean threw a bridge of regrets from one land to another.

Franqueville was not listening. He was still talking, omitting no detail of the scene which had provoked the tragedy, trying scrupulously to explain: Zarkis at the foot of the stairs seizing in his arms a girl whom he coveted; the automobiles stored against the windlass; his own action forward

in the vessel where Zarkis had followed him again, without suspecting that all these details—set down in the report of the Court of Discipline—were already familiar to Beatrice.

"I had forgotten to tell you," and his voice became more bitter, "that the head of the company is a woman, Princess Doriani. The company is none the worse for that. I have never seen the princess. They say that she is beautiful, but I am not curious."

Beatrice gave him a keen glance which he did not understand. He hesitated and was silent. His face, usually so hard, shone with such trust that Beatrice almost cried out the truth. But to stop the deception was to lose him; she could not doubt that now. And she smiled at him, with that heroic smile which the princesses of the old régime had for the executioner on the tumbrel.

"I am tiring you," he said very low, "but one more minute, just a minute, I am so much in need of clearing myself, especially with you."

Beatrice's lips trembled. With an uncertain gesture, tender and almost childlike, she placed

her finger-tips on Franqueville's breast, over that heart which she had tortured so cruelly, as if this light contact might transfer to him her despair and her repentance. The seaman's glance fell on her hand which she was already taking away and his face grew still more gentle. She flushed violently and besought him:

"Go on."

He had raised his head and was looking at her anxiously.

"What remains to explain to you is something so brutal . . ."

"Go ahead; I am not a child."

He continued his story. He had seen this Zarkis overcome the resistance of the little Italian by kisses which seemed sincere, by the ancient promises with which weak women are always persuaded to yield. The girl was already going with him. Then Franqueville, indignant, had pulled her away. She fled, and Franqueville, catching Zarkis by the collar, forbade him to practise his dirty profession on board the *Sémillante*. But the other, instead of considering himself done for,

burst into a laugh and Franqueville saw that he was drunk. Zarkis slapped his thigh and shouted:

" 'Here we're having a rumpus, because I buy and sell white flesh. But I'm better than you, at that!' "

There was a pause, but Beatrice begged him with a gesture to go on.

" 'I'm better than you; I'm the master of my sluts and you, you're the servant of one!'

"You understand," said Franqueville, "we were alone and fortunately the wind was carrying away his words, but some one might come up and I wanted, above all, to shut him up. So I grabbed his throat. He was strong and heavy, he jerked loose.

" 'Your Doriani,'—he was shrieking louder than ever,—'your employer. Everybody knows what she is, *mon vieux;* her yacht, the *Venus,* is no better than my stalls in Rio. It's more chic, that's all!'

"I was thunderstruck. I had always been taught to respect the name of the Doriani. Zarkis, grasping the railing, prevented me from dragging

him away toward a cabin where I intended to shut him up till he had slept off his wine, and he kept breathing his foul breath in my face and his vile insults and with what a voice! Great God!

" 'One night my brother,' he said, sniggering, 'who keeps an inn for the English at Cyprus, saw her, that employer of yours, in a nautical festival, impersonate Venus rising from the sea. She was quite nude, naked as my hand, get me, in a gold shell which some gigolos rowed to her yacht, sprinkling her with champagne. Naked under the champagne! Naked!' "

Franqueville sighed, smiled a small bitter smile and added:

"And you see, it was not just 'quite nude,' he said; what he said was worse! At that minute I heard a step on the upper deck. Then, in my turn, I lost my head. I struck Zarkis on the chin to knock him out, but I didn't hit the right spot. He staggered, that was all, and drawing his knife, rushed at me. I sent him back with a blow. His head struck against the windlass; I believed him to be stunned, dead drunk. A thin stream of blood

was flowing from his nostrils. The doctor declared that his skull was fractured, and Zarkis was already in a coma. He died when we were unloading at Rio. I had tried to be a judge, and I was a criminal. That's what they gave me to understand. They did not hand me over to justice—that would have done harm to the company; but I was degraded, thrown out."

He took Beatrice's hands, clasped them nervously and then burst into a mad laugh.

"And the worst, the worst is that all that he said of this woman was true! I knew it by what followed."

Beatrice stifled a gasp and withdrew her hands.

"All was true, and she, to thank me, has made of my life a handful of ashes. I am here, here to play at being stevedore in this hell, lost for ever because she did not even take the trouble to read a report."

He buried his head in his hands in a paroxysm of emotion that overwhelmed Beatrice as well.

"But you came and you have pitied me. You have understood and have absolved me; now I re-

gret nothing since I have learned that there are still women in the world like you!"

He kept walking, walking, prey to a secret fiend; then he came back to her again, master of himself, almost calm.

"For the first time for many a day I can, thanks to you, look at the evening sky without rebellion."

She had risen slowly, astonished to discover that she still had the strength to do so. Her eyes were serious and shining as if she were very ill.

"You will never know how all that you have just told me has made me suffer."

He did not understand, but took her hands.

"And you are going away."

They drew back from each other.

"To have so much gentleness," he said, "what has been your life, your suffering? Who are you?"

"Ah!" said Beatrice, in a sort of wail, "I am a woman irretrievably alone, who wants to remain so."

She believed it. She believed it with all her heart; she wished now that it was so. She re-

turned to the room where she had left her gloves; he awaited her at the door, silent, then went with her to the little staircase. As she started down, he said:

"When will you leave?"

She turned around, confused. Leave? She would never have the courage now. But what reason could she give for staying? A moment she felt herself totter, lose her balance, then deep within her, some one stronger than herself dictated the pretext which made a new lie necessary. She straightened up.

"I don't know. I want to learn a little Arabic before taking a long journey." She stopped to recover her breath, then continued: "Each evening I'm to take a lesson from our friend, Masseret."

He moved his lips to answer, but no sound came. With wondering eyes he watched her descend.

She reached the street, frozen with emotion. A Spanish fisherman met her and tossed to her, by way of greeting:

"God go with you!"

And she needed the blessing.

X

At an hour when everything was sleeping in Oran, even the bootblacks in quest of the last shoe to shine, Beatrice, in the light of her hot rooms, with no thought of bed, faced what had been said to her:

"Nude, quite nude. And he used another word, you know."

Franqueville's face, as he had said that, had been as rigid as a prison gate. Indeed this Zarkis must have used another word, a filthy word, the only one that suited the scene which Beatrice recalled now with unconquerable shame. But no one had been ashamed then, not even Wendley who loved her. She could see the fatal festival arranged by him to honor her beauty.

It was the year before. The *Venus,* cruising in the Mediterranean, had anchored at Cyprus off Neo-Paphos, or more exactly off two fishing-craft,

a customs post, an inn inhabited by flies and a Greek priest of a millennial dirtiness, an old Mercury in Greek petticoats who was selling shoes, and five black goats. But of Venus there was nothing to be found.

A vigorous growth of grass was covering her crumbling temple. The sacred stones served as pavement for the stables. A scurvy trick played on the four women and seven men on board the *Venus!* All these people who had their titles printed in *Tout Paris,* and their decorations, their clubs, the addresses of their châteaux, their city and country telephone numbers, mention of their automobiles, their yachts, their balloons, their planes, their town houses, their boxes at the opera, they had all come from Alexandria expressly to call on Venus, and the little goddess of light morality had had the impudence not to be at home. She had gone without leaving the least word or the slightest excuse. They abused the absent goddess in aristocratic terms; that is, with the coarseness of hostlers. The most vehement was the Countess of Norfeld who had taken part in this frivolous cruise

only for the purpose of making notes on Oriental feminism following the reforms of Kemal.

"One can easily see," she said, "that it's the influence of a barbarous epoch when women ignored their duties and their rights."

With authority—Cyprus was a British island—Lord Wendley had restored peace. This brilliant scholar and Oxonian loved mythological evocations.

"We will sleep here to-night," he said, "and within two days I shall resurrect Venus for you."

And he had resurrected her. On the evening of the next day Beatrice had consented, for the entertainment of her guests, to rise from the waves a hundred yards from the coast under the searchlight of the *Venus*, "nude, quite nude," magnificently nude.

She remembered that, drawn on a golden shell by six vigorous tritons, she had been warmed by their hot breath. Returning as a goddess triumphant to her boat in the midst of acclamation and Bengal lights, she had danced all night long. And never before had Wendley taken her with such fury. . . .

The next day, the Countess of Norfeld had put it to a vote. They all promptly expressed themselves.

"The nude is indecent only when it's ugly," said the men.

But a spectator before the dirty inn had raised an outcry against this terrestrial Venus, and his cry, echoed in thousands of places, had reached a man whose morality was hard as a diamond and as pure. Ah! the eddies formed by Venus rising from the foam had spread far and now they were besieging her, were hemming her in, in a whirlpool of regrets, fears and desires from which she could not free herself. She tried to reason, to regain her skepticism, but the whirlpool was there and was dragging her down.

Suddenly the electric light, which had been flickering a moment, went out.

Beatrice, throwing over her head and over her past the protection of a sheet, tried to close her eyes. A continuous noise like a shower of rain forced her up again and drew her to the window.

It was not raining, but thousands of sheep,

come by stages from the high plateaus of the South, were pouring in endless tread toward the harbor which, like an unsatiable glutton, gaped ready in the darkness to swallow the flocks after the harvest. Beatrice saw that in the sky the stars were growing pale; something luminous, which was not yet the sun but which foretold it, was rising in the east, nibbling at the night, forcing it toward the west like a thinning mass of dark cotton. And still below poured that torrent of sheep guided by Arab shepherds who in the half-light, leaning on their long staffs, assumed a Biblical grandeur. Thus the city of the colonies and the clearing agents never rested. It was a lesson in courage that Beatrice would not have understood the night on the yacht when at this same hour, her head hammered by the enervating rhythm of the engines, she had fallen exhausted on the bed, like a rose scattering its petals on the grass. A lesson in courage! For her now, was there only one kind of courage?

"If I haven't the strength to go away," she said, "my life is over."

XI

At the longest hour of the day, the hour preceding the hoped-for rest of the evening, Beatrice opened the gate of old Masseret's retreat. She had chosen for her confessional not the vast pile of the Cathedral of Oran but the little garden by the sea. For this pagan in her anguish needed the pardoning gesture of the palms and the flowering branches of the rose bushes. Descending the seven steps, she perceived the professor on the bench where she had discovered him at the time of her first visit. One would have taken him this evening for a White Father with his gray beard and his burnous of coarse wool thrown over his European clothes. He was caressing one of those ferocious Kabyle dogs which follow the nomads. He was sad; the dervish had left him that morning to travel in beggar's rags toward Lakmar, the home of one of the cruelest Jébaillian tribes. Did not an old Moroccan proverb say: "May God preserve

me from three kinds of men!" First of the three was the Khomsi, the inhabitant of Lakmar, and Mohammed had promised the professor to be the spokesman for the French cause. This made more than twenty times that Taleb had risked the worst tortures on his account. Masseret felt like a murderer.

At first there was sincere pleasure in the old man's face, then anxiety. Beatrice came to him with her eyes full of reproach.

"Ah, Monsieur Masseret, it was you who made me stay here and now you're the one to tell me what to do. If you knew . . ."

"Sit down there," he said with authority. "I know nothing."

She obeyed, and in the mottled shade of a mock pepper tree with the professor leaning over her, the penitent relived the scene of the evening before. As she talked he recovered his habitual smile. Obviously what Beatrice was saying reassured him. When she had finished, out of breath, she asked in an exhausted voice:

"And now?"

He replied quickly:

"Now? Why not do as you had planned?"

Beatrice was disappointed. So this old man had not understood. Under the phrases of her stumbling recital he had not seen the sincerity, the pain. She took her hat which she had jerked from her head as if the light straw were too heavy for her. The sun shone on her dark red hair and burnished it to flame.

"Didn't you guess? Didn't you see that he is beginning to love me and that as for me . . ."

The old African interrupted these feminine transports with a smile.

"Dear Princess, you are here alone without any distraction, seized by an obsession, and you have read in certain words, certain looks exchanged, a meaning which was not there! Soon, when you resume the course of your conquering life, you will laugh at all this."

He stopped, then continued without seeming to attach the least importance to his words:

"In any case, a woman of your beauty, of your position, could not allow herself to consider seri-

ously a man of a station so different from hers."

Beatrice laughed a small defiant laugh.

"It is he, you mean, who has shamed me into realizing where I actually belong. All my childhood was spent among men like him. Now I am returning to my first dream after a terrible voyage in another world. Besides, the *Sémillante*, before Franqueville, was commanded by my father's own brother. Why should you think that an officer of my fleet is my inferior?"

This time he smiled frankly at the generous instinct which urges every woman to place herself on a level with the man she has chosen. However, Masseret cast a last sounding-line to measure the depth of her love.

"I was thinking that Franqueville is no longer an officer in your fleet."

The wind from the west brought them the moan of a siren.

"Hush," cried Beatrice, "don't remind me of that!"

Then Masseret approached her tenderly, half amazed by the love which he had fostered.

"Dear Princess, so beautiful, too beautiful, you are always saying such wicked things about yourself, and it's plain that you have kept the heart of a young girl."

She looked at him, suddenly radiant as if his words had been a shaft of sunlight.

"When I am with him," she exclaimed, "he is so clean that I feel my heart is as pure as when I was a child of fifteen. Since the day that I first saw him on the *quai,* almost in rags, covered with sweat, and yet without loss of the dignity which distinguished him from all others, I have not been the same creature! I understood that I had found the man of my life, the man with whom I should always feel quite small and yet happy to be so, and regenerated for always. It was not yesterday that I loved him first, it was that other day!"

She stopped a minute as if to examine herself more closely, and her voice lowered.

"No, wait, it was longer ago than that. It was the minute when I first saw him in Paris, in my own office—saw him with those shoulders and that neck which didn't know how to bend."

She raised her head.

"Don't think this a fantasy, a morbid taste for love and adventure. Nor is it the surprise of finding for the first time a man who pleases me and who does not desire me. It is the reaction to all my life! That has not been what I might have wished. Now, for me, there is nothing but him. The rest is over, and I do not come of a race that turns back."

She was silent, then continued:

"But why give you reasons? There are no reasons. It is so. Since I first saw him, I have been as if under a spell."

She clasped one knee between her hands. It was now the professor's turn to catch the glow. He exclaimed:

"Send back the *Venus* and stay here!"

"I had already thought of that," she said seriously, "but the day the *Venus* returned without me to Marseilles, twenty persons would start out to hunt for me, and the next day I should be again, here, the Princess Doriani."

She gazed steadily at the dying sun.

"Dear Monsieur Masseret, I now know that there is no hell. It is here that we expiate our sins."

The old teacher sighed.

"My fate is peculiar," he said. "It forces me to be separated from people with whom I feel united by mysterious ties. I have sent Mohammed ben Slimane to torture, perhaps to death, and I have launched you in peril and adventure."

She patted his shoulder gently.

"Don't exaggerate your responsibility, dear friend. It was a long time ago that fate fixed that without your help."

A little bell tinkled as if hung to a goat's neck. The garden door squeaked. Beatrice seized her hat which had fallen to the ground and got up.

"There he is!" she exclaimed.

She opened her bag, revived her color with a bit of rouge. Franqueville came toward her. He had discarded his plain jacket and was wearing a dark blue suit, surprising in the heat, but remarkably becoming. Relieved of his old uniform of misery, he seemed to her irresistible in his simplic-

ity and quiet strength. He had come to find her; he had come only for that. He wanted to be alone with her, and he clasped the professor's hand without even inventing an excuse.

They departed, followed by Masseret's gaze. The old man, remembering the Arabian proverb, murmured:

"Love flees the graybeard as the sheep flees the jackal."

And the great white burnous entered the house alone.

In spite of his haste to be alone with her, Franqueville led Beatrice back through the streets full of the joyous life of twilight, without any allusion to what had happened the evening before. He talked of what they saw, of what he could point out to her or teach her about the place, with the serious air that the habit of solitude gives to men, but he did not seek longer to hide his heart or hold it detached from the humanity he pitied.

And each evening was the same. When he did not go to find Beatrice at the professor's house he would wait for her at a little distance outside,

greeting her always with the same restrained pleasure, free from any hint of familiarity, as if to show her that she had only to make a sign to be rid of him.

Perhaps his eyes were becoming less troubled and of a softer gray, and his bearing had become less taut, more nonchalant; but he continued to treat her with that kind of mistrust he showed toward all women. And Beatrice could not walk beside him without trembling knees and buzzing ears, without being too pale or too red, without making desperate efforts to remain calm and not to cry out that she loved him, without wondering if she had not been mistaken that day when he had confessed and she had felt so close to him. . . . Perhaps Professor Masseret was right, after all . . . However, she submitted without a complaint to the humiliation of loving a man who did not even consider her. Preferring what she had to nothing, she held herself in leash so as not to show him the tumult in her soul. It was enough to remain always near him, imprisoned by gestures and by words.

The fascination which he had for her increased

each day from the very struggle she was obliged to wage. She lived in a kind of hypnosis. Unable to endure a witness to her folly and distress, she had sent her maid back to the *Venus*, and bought the patience of the men by promising huge rewards. She had forbidden them to send her mail.

Since her awakening she had wanted to pitch into the ravine the bastion of the Létang gardens which hid the wheat pier from her view.

From the terrace she could see the road, but the walls of sacks and the clouds of dust concealed the shack of the superintendent. She was jealous of the Moroccans and the negroes who worked under his orders, toilers who had the joy of obeying him, of seeing him and hearing him. At the foot of the fortress wall, mules would stamp before the drinking trough with a tinkling rattle of their Andalusian collars. The Arabian drivers caressed the beasts while they were drinking or even drank beside them, cheek against cheek, to set an example, and Beatrice thought they were happier than she. With what good humor they tore off their elabo-

rately wound turbans to wipe the satin mouths! This African joy of life, with its bells, its gay snorting beasts, made her feel more keenly than ever her loneliness. Every one seemed happier than she, even the poor Spanish couples who on the benches in the garden were eating fried fish and olives and drinking from one glass.

She was waiting for the evening. She scorned the promenades in the neighborhoods perfumed by orange trees and roses, and gave rein to her impatience by walking across the city, past the vast doors of the wine cellars, before the dark caverns of the storehouses where the sacks of wheat and barley were piled up. She mingled with the crowd of zouaves and *moukères* who were willing to risk one eye above their cloaks, the clearing agents who carried grain in their pockets and who could talk only of crops and vintage. She climbed toward the market, following the hucksters' vehicles, old wrecks of carts disappearing under mountains of green peas, pyramids of lemons and oranges; then she descended toward the marine quarter where before the mosque she was greeted by a centenary fig

tree, the fresh gush of a fountain, and the gleam of white teeth belonging to the sexton's daughter, a young negress who adorned the white walls of the sanctuary like a tempting fresco. The black Venus smiled at the white.

Finally came her reward. As Franqueville approached she attempted to read his thoughts by his carriage and the set of his shoulders.

One evening in the Létang gardens when they had exchanged ideas as innocuous as the sea which stretched out of sight before them, Beatrice, surprising herself by her own boldness, said:

"If you have nothing better to do, why don't we have dinner together?"

At first he looked as if he feared that she was making fun of him, then his face lighted with pleasure. They went to dine in the Place de la Perle in a tavern quite Spanish in its elegance, where two servants clattered thick plates to the music of a phonograph and where each table had its bouquet of jasmine, its lemons and its stains. They saw none of that, they heard nothing. Their table, outdoors, was bathed in the blue night which

made an ancient mosque look like a theater setting.

Seated facing each other, silent and embarrassed, Beatrice and Franqueville ate their *hors d'œuvre* without heed. But, as if by enchantment, their embarrassment suddenly disappeared and they caught each other's glance. Yet they still found nothing to say until Franqueville, suddenly pale, took one of Beatrice's hands between his. She had so ardently longed for this moment that for several seconds she had to close her eyes to keep from falling. When she opened them again, she knew that she could pretend no longer. Franqueville bent over her and read the confession in her eyes with a kind of terror. He kept pressing her hand between his as if he must have this material proof of her surrender.

Like children they exchanged tender and stammering words, and like children who are too happy they began to laugh.

The waiter had brought plates. Beatrice was not hungry. Franqueville ate nothing but tried to make her eat. She told him of her painful days wasted in guessing where he was on that burning

pier. He told her that he had bought a watch to count the minutes each day until the evening. He sighed in relief:

"It's good to be happy!"

But he could not have a joy without a tinge of bitterness, without prevision of its end. He spoke of the journey to the south which Beatrice had planned. Since she was to go, when would it be? She hesitated, then suddenly seized the brown hands.

"We could both go and never come back!"

He withdrew his fingers and looked at her eagerly.

"You would do that?"

She nodded slowly. He did not answer, but dropped his head on his arms; she heard his breath come short, agitated. But nothing now could frighten Beatrice. In the tone of a mother speaking to a child, she asked:

"What is it?"

His gesture was abrupt, almost fierce.

"I shall never have anything but atrocious confessions to make to you. I am under danger of

arrest and no matter how deep or how far away I hide myself, some day I shall be discovered."

She repeated mechanically: "Arrest?"

"Yes," he replied. "I was too cowardly the other day to tell you everything. But I must always come back to this wretched affair. That *canaille* of a Constantin Zarkis is not completely dead; he has relatives, a brother, a jack of the same trade but more advanced, who practises his profession amid elegant surroundings: Monte Carlo, Biarritz and Ostend. And this charming fellow, hoping to bleed my family, has sworn to avenge his brother. While I belonged to the Mediterranean Company he did not dare attack me. Now I'm down, a fallen tree, and he attacks the branches. Some day or other he'll get me because I was born under an evil star. Then I shall exchange my hut on the wharves for a prison cell."

He turned a pale face toward the night.

"You see I have no right to leave. This evening I should not even have . . ."

Fear that she was going to lose him again made her tremble. Rising abruptly, she said:

"Pay the check; let us go."

She took his arm and led him toward the little street of Charras. There she put her arms around his broad shoulders.

"I am ready to endure anything with you."

Their faces were close.

"No," she continued, "I won't allow you to suffer so unjustly. I have resources. It ought not to be very difficult to intimidate a man like this Zarkis. Don't be afraid of anything now, I would give my life for you . . ."

He had drawn her close against him. Under his lips the end of the sentence died.

XII

Beatrice's maid, severe as the bearer of a warrant waiting for the legal hour to serve it, spoiled her awakening.

"I am sorry to have disobeyed the orders of Madame the Princess, but Lord Wendley arrived this morning and in view of the urgency . . . "

She bestowed on Beatrice a look full of meaning. Then more words:

"I did everything to prevent his coming here, himself, to find Madame. That was not easy. Madame knows him."

In that last sentence spoke disapproval and hostility, softened now by the feeling that Wendley was at the end of his reign. Beatrice got up without answering. Any question would be useless. She had known for a long time that on the day Wendley exhausted his reserve of patience, he would find both the *Venus* and herself as he pleased. One can't be attached for years to the In-

telligence Service for nothing. Having come directly to Mers-el-Kébir, doubtless Wendley already had a list of all the hotels in Oran and the address of the superintendent of police. To try to escape him was a dream. It was to be expected, moreover, that after the great happiness of the evening before, something unpleasant would happen! But she felt herself henceforward out of the reach of destiny, full of limitless energy. She made a rapid calculation. By going to the *Venus* at three o'clock, the peak of the day's activities at the harbor, she might be able to get back at six o'clock before the workers had deserted the wharves. But she knew Wendley too well to hope to avoid a long session; it was wise, then, before leaving to foresee the worst and to have word taken to Franqueville.

Saying she was not well, she would ask him not to worry this evening if she did not come to the professor's house or to the little restaurant; they were to dine again in the Place de la Perle. The next day she would find him at the harbor and they would lunch together. She had written too

many love-letters; she did not want this one to be like the others. And it was not like the others.

Exactly at two o'clock, when the sun was beating down on the wharves like a trip-hammer, Beatrice left the city in a rented Panhard. The car, in the thunder of its escape, drenched with clouds of dust the villas of the nouveaux riches, hideous structures of wood or garish stone that dishonored the coast, a beautiful arc of sapphire and green.

Just before reaching Mers-el-Kébir, the car stopped before a barrier. In a near-by hole a charge of dynamite exploded, followed by a tumultuous avalanche. The car was allowed to proceed again. A crew of men, half naked, with black glasses and the faces of crows, watched them pass.

"Those are soldiers sentenced to public labor, Madame," replied the chauffeur in response to her inquiry. "There are some who haven't done anything much but they are paying for the others."

She did not reply. She was thinking of Franqueville. He was paying for others . . . for one other . . .

"Hurry!" she exclaimed; "Hurry . . . "

Finally the *Venus* appeared, aristocratically aloof from the flotilla of fishing-boats where tireless human spiders were mending their nets. There was a hubbub on board at the arrival of the owner. The crew was hardly "according to regulations," but she tried to see nothing amiss. She was on a visit. That was the explanation she tossed to the second officer who received her in a boat with eight oars; an explanation which slackened the pace of sixteen arms, disappointed in the hope of freedom that had come to them with the appearance of Beatrice. With one hand trailing in the water and a frown on her lovely face, for the first time Beatrice regarded the *Venus* as an enemy. Over the short bright waves floated an English refrain.

"Ronald is already playing the phonograph," she thought. "Always the same and always at home."

He was playing the phonograph—an expensive make which he had given her with records chosen by himself—reminding him, no doubt, of the tunes which, many times, in palaces, dance-halls or at the theater, had drawn them close together. He

was playing the phonograph, and she seemed to smell the fragrance of his cigar. The British ensign was planted boldly in the heart of the *Venus*, in the heart of Beatrice Doriani herself.

However, the face which welcomed her at the top of the ladder—correctly behind the captain's—was not that of a conqueror, nor was it a conqueror's voice which said, "At last!" Allowing her hand to rest in his, Beatrice looked at Wendley with the eyes of a traveler returned to her homeland after a journey around the world.

With his male beauty, softened by that English elegance which was without a flaw, and that nonchalance which came of his social assurance, he was the perfect type which she had always loved. How was it that she could now look at him without more emotion than she would feel for a manikin behind a show-window? She felt only a cruel annoyance. Passing silently before the anxious, bewildered crew, they reached the bow where, under the canopy cooled by the breeze, easy chairs were awaiting them. She had no desire to go down to her cabin. Truly she was on a visit.

It was he who first broke the silence. He spoke in English:

"I found out at Gibraltar, Beatrice, that the *Venus* was anchored here. One of our cruisers was leaving for the Orient and I could not resist coming."

"But, Ronald, you should have let me know."

"Have we reached that point?"

"Your arrival is a breach of my liberty."

"You mean . . ." Under this stab he had returned to the intimate French "thou."

She also dropped into French, but in order better to define her reserve.

"I owe you an explanation, Ronald, but it would have been better not to give it here."

Her elbows on her knees, she looked at him with a suppliant air and, in a voice which she did not recognize, began to tell him the truth with dull and hurried words like the chords of a piano. She stiffened against the pain she felt in him and, to convince him that it was all really so, she found more and more words. While she was talking he drew close to her as if hypnotized. Something so

pathetic emanated from him, from his silence, from the hand he had placed on hers, that the more she talked the more she felt her tears rising. And the more the tears came, the more hard things she said, the closer drew their heads. It was almost with a sob, her forehead against his smooth-shaved cheek, that she moaned:

"Would you keep me in spite of myself, Ronny? Would that be happiness?"

He gently pushed her away and dried the tears which were burning her face. Then he got up, went to the railing and lighted a cigarette, his eyes remote. He had understood that all was over.

"Ronny," said Beatrice in an uncertain voice.

His muscles played under the light stuff of his jacket. He turned around apparently calm—he had the great courage of his race, the power to endure pain—and came close to her as if awaiting an order.

She murmured dully:

"Have we nothing more to say to each other?"

He laughed grimly and did not answer but, lifting up the lid of the phonograph, put on a record

and sat down on the floor at her feet. The record spun:

> *"Sometimes I love you;*
> *Sometimes I hate you,*
> *But when I hate you*
> *It's 'cause I love you!"*

Wendley had raised his head and his eyes scorched Beatrice. She motioned him to stop the record. He obeyed, in his absorption upsetting a chair. Returning to Beatrice, he leaned over and seized her hands.

"Who is it? I should at least know that."

She remembered the evening when, in order to return to him more quickly, she had signed, without reading, the conviction of Franqueville. She also recalled the bitter discussion they had had on the subject. She shook her head.

"What use, Ronald? You would not understand."

Wendley flushed hotly. "So," he said, "it's true. I had been informed. You, Beatrice, you, in love with a man disgraced, unworthy!"

She shrugged her shoulders sadly.

"I don't place worth on the same plane as you, Ronald."

Wendley's big blue eyes gleamed, but he lowered his lids and as if with a violent effort turned his back on Beatrice. She saw that his brown neck had gone almost as white as the edge of his collar. Realizing how she had made him suffer, she forced him to look at her. He said in a lifeless tone:

"I had told my brother. The news of our coming marriage is known at my club. I have had the chairs in the anteroom recovered with that old damask you admired so at Silberman's."

His arrogant face had assumed a childlike expression. She sensed that he was at the end of his courage. When he buried his face in her skirt she had not the heart to repulse him. Through her thin dress his lips seemed to burn her knees. Life was detestable. . . . The bell rang for tea.

"Half past five!" she exclaimed in alarm. "I must go."

The noise of the tea-wagon which the waiter was pushing, sounded to her like thunder.

"I must go!"

Wendley had risen, his mouth hard.

"They have arranged a spectacle, a fishing party with torches, for you to-night; the whole crew is thinking only of you. You have the right to leave me but not to disappoint them."

"Nothing will keep me. Go order the boat, Ronald."

He went away slowly with an air so cold and strange that Beatrice was afraid. She calculated: Oran was an hour away, and if she returned now she would be running the risk of encountering Franqueville, who thought she was in bed. When Wendley came back, she said in a low voice:

"I have changed my mind, I'll stay."

"You will be good enough to change the order yourself, Beatrice."

He struck the little gong which gleamed on the table.

"Excuse me," she said humbly.

He looked at her hopelessly and said:

"This is the first time that I ever wanted to die."

She took his arm and made him walk along the

deck. She wanted to soften their last hours. With the perversity of the feminine heart, she had discovered that, instead of passion, a very tender bond united them.

She dressed for dinner. Seated at her right—Beatrice had invited the yacht's officers to her table—Wendley scarcely touched his food. Knowing that the princess liked music during the meal, Captain Allegret had secured a small Spanish orchestra. Fragrant flowers were on the table. To each word from Beatrice, Wendley replied with a tired smile. When she got up to go out on the deck, he murmured:

"You have never been so beautiful, Beatrice."

They stretched out on steamer chairs on the forward deck before the liqueur table. The night had a subtle, clandestine mildness. Beside the *Venus* the boats from the yacht and the Spanish and Neapolitan craft glided by, propelled by mighty strokes of the oars. The fishing was beginning. The torches which the men waved, forward in each boat, illumined the sea and cast on Beatrice and her companion a lurid gleam. Fervent as Saint

George before the dragon, the fishermen, harpoon in hand, bent over the abyss; glinting forms leaped in the light; large fish blinded by the flares soon were struggling in rough hands. Neither Beatrice nor Wendley could be interested in anything except what was passing in their minds, but after several minutes Beatrice got up.

"We must watch them, Ronny. Didn't I stay for that?"

He did not relish her teasing and refused to budge. Above the firelit sea the old Spanish fort raised its romantic towers, and under the high walls the gleam of torches and murderous lances, brandished in the tumult, transported it back to the feudal age in which it had been conceived.

Lying near Beatrice, Wendley watched her like a condemned prisoner whose last hours the pendulum was counting. She made him get up; she spoke to him, her face tender:

"You asked me to stay on their account," she said; "can't you make an effort too?"

Standing side by side in the bow of the yacht, they watched the magnificent sport. Wendley had

gamely assumed his usual attitude of haughty and nonchalant assurance. With his shoulder against that of the woman of whom he had always been so proud, he recovered his composure, and both smiled at the sailors who cheered them as they passed. In the light which mounted from the boats, these two, indubitably made for each other, stood like the masters they were, in command on this sparkling ship. Suddenly almost directly under them a light rowboat darted, swifter than the others and without lights. Beatrice leaned forward. She imagined she had seen a pair of broad shoulders, bent as under a crushing weight—shoulders which had become familiar. But when she straightened up, the boat had disappeared with others in the smoke from the torches. An hallucination, surely. She saw Franqueville everywhere, because he was always in her heart. How could he be there this evening? Wendley felt her shiver; he turned anxiously and put his arm about her.

"Are you cold?"

She shook her head; on the contrary, she was

burning. The torches seemed to liquefy in the night, the music from guitars whirled in the flames. Beatrice caught at the railing.

"Let us go down," said Wendley peremptorily. "You are trembling, Beatrice."

He wrapped her cloak about her and drew her away.

And while they were submerged by the shadows, in the midst of the whirlpool of flames and smoke and the cries of men intoxicated by struggle, Franqueville, sitting at the helm of a boat with one pair of oars, commanded:

"Turn around. We'll go back, Perez."

The other wheeled, astounded.

"But, by the blood of Christ, we have just arrived, Señor Francese!"

"Turn around," repeated the stern voice. "I've seen what I wanted to see."

The rough man hesitated a minute, furious to be deprived of the show.

"The devil!" he exclaimed. "I brought you here to show my gratitude for what you did for me. One never knows how to please you."

The boat turned slowly. Franqueville leaned over and put his hand on the man's knee.

"I'm sorry, but let's go back," he said.

Perez looked at him and guessed tragedy in the lowered face. He murmured in his turn:

"It is I who should apologize, Señor!"

Emerging from the fire, the boat headed toward Oran.

XIII

The next day at noon Beatrice was at the foot of the stairway which leads from the wharves to the city, without regard for the sun or for passers-by, whose curious glances vaguely reproached her. With her eyes she anxiously sought out the superintendent's hut across the stretches of sacks and casks. Already several men of his gang—she had learned to recognize them—were coming, scattering in all directions, or disposing themselves in the shade of the docks with their lunches in their handkerchiefs.

Finally she saw him. He was walking slowly, in his shirt-sleeves with his coat slung over his shoulder, something she had never seen him do. He wore no hat at this hour, and the sun was beating down murderously. She advanced to meet him, frightened, but instead of approaching the stairway as usual, he disappeared down a narrow passage without turning his head in her direction.

He knew then. She had not imagined it the evening before. She remembered the broad shoulders, stooped over in the rowboat. To yield to despair and to be able to cry there on the steps would have relieved her; her spirit was broken. But the need to act, to fight, revived her reserve of strength. She devised a plan. To avoid her, Franqueville had taken the longer road; if she went directly to his house she would arrive before him. Otherwise, she would find his door closed.

She dashed up the stairs with all the ardor and vigor of limbs kept supple by sports and massage. A zouave stopped with his hands before his eyes, as if the sun had struck him, and exclaimed:

"Don't wear yourself out, *ma jolie!* He would be very stupid not to wait for you!"

She was at the top. She still had to climb the steps to la Calère; then she was before Franqueville's door. The old woman was washing the tile floor in her room. It was surprising to see this old beldame wash anything. She got up, showing her only tooth in friendly fashion, for in the quarter Beatrice was known to be generous.

"He hasn't come yet," she said, "but you may come in, Señora."

Beatrice did not try to plumb the meaning of this simple sentence, which hinted at a knowledge of her recent life. She put ten francs in the dirty hand.

"Don't tell him I'm here when you see him. I'll wait up-stairs."

The woman smiled and pointed to the staircase. The roof creaked; it was baking hot, and there was not a patch of shade. But Beatrice did not dare go into the room. There was no indiscretion about her coming to the roof, even if she were unwelcome. Her head was reeling, and dazzling spots were dancing in the air. She leaned against the wall.

The outer door banged. Franqueville came up. When he saw Beatrice, he stopped like a bull driven into the arena, then recoiled. But she was already upon him, clasping his arms and shoulders with incredible strength.

"Well, it is I, Beatrice Doriani, and I lied to you; but listen, listen! I was trying to make

amends, to save you in spite of yourself. Afterward, I was cowardly. I did not dare. I wanted——"

She began to sob. He pushed her away.

"You are making game of me. Do not lie any more. Your place is not here."

She had seen him several times tired, unhappy, aged, but never ravaged to this extent. She scarcely recognized him.

She did not reply. He crossed his arms.

"Why have you acted this comedy?"

She had reached the end of her strength. But she made an effort to speak:

"Ask the one who knew my name and who begged me to hide it from you. Ask your friend, Masseret, if it was I who devised this comedy, as you call it."

Circles of fire seemed to envelop her. She staggered. He led her to a chair and gave her a drink, then bathed her temples with a dampened cloth. Then as the color returned to her beautiful wan face, he moved away and threw himself on his bed, his head in the pillow.

"I don't understand. I shall go mad!"

He got up again and turned toward the sea, a bright rectangle framed by the window.

"And last night, that man?"

She sighed wearily.

"Did you follow me?"

He made a disdainful gesture.

"No, but it is said that one is always rewarded for his good deeds! It was to repay me for mine that Perez took me there!"

He took the handkerchief that he had placed on Beatrice's forehead and touched it to his own. She smoothed her hair and mechanically put on her hat.

"If you cared to give yourself the trouble to search the newspapers of two months ago, you would find the announcement of the coming marriage of Princess Doriani to Lord Wendley. This plan was abandoned. Lord Wendley knew it, but people in love, you know, always need to be close to their unhappiness. He found me again; I should not have left Oran and returned to the *Venus* except to break off with him."

"Ah!" he said, "truly one would hardly have guessed it!"

She looked into his eyes.

"Well, at any rate, nobody seeing me now would believe I'm *here* on any such errand."

They were silent, tired of these arguments which led nowhere. Then he said as if talking to himself:

"I can't believe you any more."

He went toward the door. She followed him, very pale, without a gesture, guessing instinctively that she must wait and ask succor of time.

"I can do nothing for you? You will accept nothing from me?"

"Nothing." He stopped a minute.

"And you would do nothing. I am a man to be visited secretly under a false name, but not to be defended in the broad daylight, before every one."

"And if I prove to you that you are wrong?"

He put his hands in his pockets, leaned back against the wall and laughed like a mad man.

Beatrice left. In the street she could still hear that mad laugh.

PART THREE

I

THAT insulting laugh; she heard it for three days, on the *Venus*, in the face of the immensity of the sea, on the Blue Express, through the long miles of flat country separating Marseilles from Paris, penetrating the noise of wheels and the roar of the tunnels. But she belonged to that indomitable race which in every peril had found renewed strength to meet it. She had not left Oran to escape further humiliation and pain; she had left as a combatant ready for a struggle and was returning to Paris to save Franqueville, to reconquer him in spite of himself. Some day—it must be—he would ask her pardon for that laugh! Perhaps it would be when his mouth sought hers or when, with his head in her lap, he lay crying like a child. In some manner he would regret that laugh.

For the first time a mortal doubt assailed Bea-

trice. *Venus Victrix,* till now she had known nothing but triumph. Was this the end of her career as a goddess? Would Oran mark that career for ever with a black stone? Then where should she seek relief and help? In spite of her anguish she thought only of the goal. The Varèzes could not be checked by an obstacle in the path—the example of the Grand Admiral of the Fleet begging for the prisoners from door to door, in cowl and bare feet, proved it. And Beatrice was more than ever a Varèze. She would carry on to the end at any risk.

She was welcomed by a Paris bare-armed and straw-hatted: a summer Paris which the snobs had abandoned for Le Touquet, Dinard, Deauville and other fashionable seaside resorts. The Place des États-Unis was sleeping on its green carpet; sparrows were hopping about on the heads of Lafayette and Washington, who, clasping hands, seemed to compliment each other on their courage:

"We are the only ones who are not shirkers; the last fighters in all this rich city."

Beatrice gazed sympathetically.

Her arrival, unannounced, upset the plans of her servants who were entertaining their relatives from the country. She gave no heed to these yokels, male and female, who were turning the servants' quarters into a village cabaret, but simply ordered her trunks left in the hall, unopened. She was a bird of passage in her own house, come to fulfil a task which would brook no delay. And what a task—the salvation of her life! She dined alone, in her room stripped of all its bibelots, and slept as in a station hotel.

The next morning, at an hour which made her servants shiver, Beatrice demanded her breakfast and her bath. She dressed quickly and, to save time, walked to the company building. There she would at least find some one to talk to about Franqueville. This need, from which she had been suffering cruelly for six long days, made her miss Wendley, for he would surely have recalled the absent one, for other reasons.

Poor Ronald! In all this drama he had been only a pawn in the fingers of destiny. He seemed sincerely unhappy, and Beatrice, who was unhappy

for the same reason, thought of him with that sympathy which two victims afflicted with the same disease feel for each other. But Wendley was not there, and Beatrice set out to find old Serres.

About ten o'clock she approached the shipping district. All the rest of Paris had seemed an unreal world. Oran alone was real, certain streets in la Calère, a few corners of the old port. All else had impressed her as merely a setting which would crumble at the lightest touch. But from Rue Royale she found herself in the kingdom of the sea; Venus reentered her own domain. Above his dreadnaught of stone, Thomas Cook still loosed his pennants to all the winds of the world. Chromos, whose lurid colors leaped from the windows, testified that the Cunard, the Western Railway, the White Star Line and others still continued their traffic with all countries. Swiss mountains, Italian lakes, Mediterranean beaches and shores of the Orient . . . Beatrice passed them without a glance. Under all skies she had spent hours of idleness and passion, but since they had not been with Franqueville she had forgotten them.

As she was not in a mood to humor the susceptibilities of her staff, she had not warned the company of her arrival. Each time she returned, Beatrice, with generous diplomacy, had had herself preceded by trumpets—in the shape of telephone bells—in order to find no one at fault. The humiliation of her retainers would have been threefold, suffered at the hands of a woman. This morning the frightened bustle provoked by her entrance did not even make her smile.

She received the director-general, Commandant Delmas, and his colleagues who had convicted Franqueville. Her beautiful face showed a hint of something which disquieted these gentlemen. When a woman has that look there is generally a fixed idea behind it, which is not reassuring. The chief had got up on the wrong side of the bed! The news spread rapidly. Serres, always alone, heard it last. Fifteen minutes later a telephone message called him to the president's office.

"Monsieur Serres," said Beatrice from the depths of her chair, "you are the only one who didn't come without having to be called."

He had shaved his mustache and dyed his hair, but between his lids still filtered that keen green gaze that she had not forgotten.

"Princess," he said, "they did not tell me. I am considered a negligible quantity; I have such a bad reputation."

She pushed toward him a box of cigars. Without taking one, he sat down close to her. They looked at each other, each awaiting the attack. It was Beatrice who commenced, with that tranquil assurance, that habit of keeping aloof even in familiarity, which made her so redoubtable.

"Tell me, Monsieur Serres, have you recent news of your friend, Franqueville?"

Serres raised his eyebrows and his tightened lips indicated a very plain intention: he would not permit Beatrice to make sport of him. Suddenly he spread his cards. No, he had no news, but he did not doubt for a second that the princess had brought some. There was a silence. The director of personnel considered with attention the lovely face before him; it held something new and pathetic which touched him. Although the Princess

Doriani was still mistress of herself—it was one of the reasons he admired her—he perceived in her a turbulent and painful emotion which troubled his old man's heart, a heart that love had so often tortured. Beatrice experienced a great relief in finding herself read by this shrewd sorcerer of the East. Then Serres spoke; his last letter from Franqueville was dated two weeks earlier.

"For the last month——" he began.

Beatrice started; her tanned cheeks heightened their color, while Serres prolonged the last word.

"During the last month," he continued, regarding fixedly the shriveled hand which lay on his knee, "Franqueville's letters have taken on a new tone, relieved of their former bitterness. Twice I discovered the word happiness and I felt that my man was grasping at life again. Finally—I am quoting—'a magnificent light was rising above his misery, brightening his horizon.' "

For a moment there was heard only the dull noises from the street.

"That day," continued Serres, "I buried my doubts and made an apology to you, Princess."

turn announced in the papers and the fish will not delay to nibble at the bait."

"Why so much bother? Couldn't we just go find him?"

Serres began to laugh:

"That would be to deliver yourself tied hand and foot, Princess. We must wait for his attack. It's the only thing to do."

Beatrice got up, snapping her fingers.

"Yes, with men, in business, one must always wait. Well, go ahead, do what you like."

They looked at each other a minute, in their eyes perfect understanding. This old seaman exiled in an office was in his way a thoroughbred. Beatrice was not sorry to have him for a confidant.

When Serres had left, the storm began to rumble around the company. The president intended to show that she was there; it was revenge in advance for the criticism which would not fail to break over her, once her state of mind concerning the disgraced officer was known.

Beatrice appeared at her desk each morning determined to assert her authority and to distract

herself from the anguish of mind which was consuming her. How long it seemed, awaiting Zarkis' attack! One day a letter arrived from Masseret. The old teacher had seen nothing of Franqueville; the curé of Oran had supplanted the professor in his affections. Beatrice, who was not bred on the Bible, understood none of this and wondered what the curé or God had to do with it. But Franqueville was drawing consolation from this new friendship; that was the important thing.

She managed to get through the days but the nights were unbearable. She dared not call on any one; people now bored her more than her own ennui. She had found a friend from the provinces whom she dragged everywhere, spending pointless evenings with a keen and persistent loneliness in her heart like the wail of the saxophones. She went to hear some negroes, who in a stuffy room saturated with the odor of spices and heated copper, sang songs that were horribly sad, in voices wild and forlorn. Beatrice, evoking Franqueville's face, his gestures, his confidences, had money passed to the orchestra to persuade them to play

an old Spanish melody which had lulled them both in the Place de la Perle.

One Sunday she traveled two hundred miles by automobile to visit, in the Vosges, the house of an aged preacher buried the day before. The poor man had died, so the country folk said, from the disgrace which his son, caught in a scandal, had brought upon the family. Beatrice came away clenching her teeth in pity and anger.

Finally one morning the telephone began to jingle in its corner; Monsieur Serres from the company insisted on speaking to the president. Beatrice ran to the instrument and the news exploded in her face like a revolver-shot.

"Princess, the fish is biting. Come!"

II

"THAT *canaille* of a Constantin Zarkis is not completely dead; he has relatives, a brother, a jack of the same trade but more advanced, who practises his profession amid elegant surroundings: Monte Carlo, Biarritz and Ostend. And this charming fellow, hoping to bleed my family, has sworn to avenge his brother. While I belonged to the Mediterranean Company he did not dare attack me. Now I'm down, a fallen tree, and he attacks the branches. Some day or other he'll get me because I was born under an evil star. Then I shall exchange my hut on the wharves for a prison cell."

When, at the Café de la Perle one evening, Franqueville had dropped this last sentence, his expression was like that of a man already looking from behind the bars. What a memory! The Spanish quarter with its low houses in the shadow of the ancient mosque seemed a tragic setting

haunted by an uneasy ghost: dock-hands in rags, sordid women around a fountain, negroes sipping no-one-knew-what in the shadows. Franqueville had got up and in his effort to smile, his smile was that of a man condemned to torment. In the little Rue de Charras, dark and empty, Beatrice had stopped and placed her hands on his broad shoulders.

"It ought not to be very difficult to intimidate a man like this Zarkis."

Just as she said this her eyes, now accustomed to the darkness, had fixed themselves upon a sinister cave, closed by a grille. Then she had recognized the neighborhood. An ancient Spanish jail—one of the places of interest shown to tourists—where ball and chain still clanked. A prison. With difficulty she had suppressed a shiver.

Now this Zarkis was in Paris and she was expecting him. Serres had skilfully managed the business. Heaven grant he loves money more than anything, she thought. Then it would, of course, be simple. She considered receiving the Levantine at her home, as a happy omen; she would sign

Franqueville's deliverance at the very same table where she had signed his condemnation. At this thought her blood ran warmer through her veins.

Exactly on time, the man arrived. He stopped a moment before the door which a servant closed behind him. Too well dressed, his hands daintily manicured and gold watch at his wrist, he was not at all what Beatrice had imagined. Tall, with bold eyes and sensual lips, he had the assurance of a man backed by bundles of bank notes in his pocket and a jeweled revolver on his hip. Beatrice smelled the strong odor of verbenas and began to be sorry that he was not the miserable wretch she had expected. However, her visitor, after having patiently allowed himself to be examined in detail, bowed low with a slight smile, so that Beatrice could see only black hair plastered to his head like a steel helmet. Then Zarkis straightened himself.

"I had not expected the great honor of being received by you, Princess," he said.

Beatrice sat down and indicated a chair at a distance.

"Since it's a matter concerning the Mediterranean Company, it is very natural, Monsieur, that I should study it."

Zarkis showed his strong white teeth in a smile which must have conquered many hearts, and drawing out of his pocket his silk handkerchief which he waved gently before his face, he murmured:

"Of course . . ."

His nails gleamed like the diamonds in his rings. He returned the handkerchief to his pocket.

"Moreover, I am glad of it," he added, "since the president of the Mediterranean Company is also a ravishing princess."

Beatrice's cheeks began to flame, and something deadly came into her eyes, but the Greek did not seem to notice. His insolent, caressing eyes appraised Beatrice.

"Let us come to the point," she said curtly. "The company, Monsieur, is ready to examine your proposals."

"The company, Madame, or its president?"

Beatrice restrained herself with great effort

from having her visitor shown out. But she noticed the table where she had signed the dismissal, and answered in a tone almost polite:

"It makes little difference, Monsieur."

"If it made no difference, Madame,"—this time Zarkis had risen and began to walk across the room,—"I should not ask you." He halted abruptly. "Understand, I am not the upstart you think I am and whom you despise; at least, not merely that; you see before you a man who won't be tricked. If I am to be shuttled back and forth from the president to the company . . ."

Beatrice stopped him with a gesture.

"No, I am here to transact business, I alone."

He sat down again, drew his chair nearer hers without any familiarity, but with decision, and said in a heavy voice:

"It's better so. I am sure of dealing with some one who will understand all the nuances of the affair. It is a delicate business when a passenger is assassinated! . . ."

"Assassinated!" cried Beatrice. "None of my officers is a criminal."

In spite of her, her love had spoken. The man, without the least embarrassment, looked in her eyes as at a target.

"A young officer in trouble is always innocent in the eyes of a judge of your sex, Princess. I am also taking into account that a woman traveling alone needs distraction. In a city like Oran, for example . . ."

So, he knew! Beatrice clenched her teeth and said, looking far over Zarkis' head:

"How much do you want, Monsieur?"

Zarkis leaned back in his chair with a short laugh.

"We will speak of money later, Princess. Do I look like a beggar?"

She answered without making a move:

"I don't understand."

Getting up, he began to walk again, then stopped before her.

"You see, Madame, you can open for me a door which interests me more than that of your strong box. I want to talk about the door of society, of that society where you are all powerful, and which

would be closed to me for ever, if I hadn't had the pleasure of being received by you, to-day."

She remained speechless. The cards were exposed; she had lost the first trick.

"Perhaps you think that I'm asking too much," he continued, "but what you're asking is not a trifle. It's no joke to pass the sponge over the criminal act—I insist upon using the word 'criminal'—of one of your officers, and to relinquish all pursuit of him. Otherwise you would not have summoned me here to-day."

He snapped his fingers several times.

"What I'm asking of you is not dictated by my vanity, as you must think. I have just taken over, in Paris, the direction of a bank. We need clients. To be presented by you to your friends, to people of your class capable of entrusting their business to us—and they will do it if they see your name at the head of my subscribers—that is of primary importance to me. That's the whole truth."

There was a silence. Beatrice felt herself succumbing to nausea. Zarkis, who perceived this, smiled narrowly and bowed.

"I see that you are beginning to grasp the situation and I am sure that before long we will understand each other thoroughly. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you soon again, Princess."

He backed out. Beatrice sat motionless a minute, her eyes fixed on the door which had closed again. Then tottering across the salon, she flung the window wide open.

III

BEATRICE was now accustomed to sleepless nights, but she was to remember long this night of humiliating debate with herself. How had she so quickly put her pride and her very life at the behest of this man, this Franqueville, who sallied forth armed only with the implacable light of the Bible? There was no reasonable answer to that. She only knew that with Franqueville all that was cheap in her slipped from her heart and her mind as if she had never known other sensations on earth. I can not love any one else, she thought, but couldn't I get along without his love? . . . She dared not examine the prospect; she saw a dark gulf between . . . However, when a pale cold light announced the day, she had made her decision. She would accept the proposition of the banker, Marino Zarkis.

"*Mon Dieu,*" she murmured, "I did not think it would be so hard!"

She reflected further: "The most odious part is to fail those who have confidence in me by introducing to them this perfumed bounder." The thought shamed her intolerably.

One day in the Alps, she had seen a movie troupe throw into a torrent a dummy doubling for the star of the film. The man of wax and straw, dragged and whirled by the furious force of the water, hurled from one rock to another, had very quickly been torn to shreds. Beatrice pictured for herself a similar end. She saw herself henceforward lost, but she coldly accepted her fate. "For him I will accept anything, consent to anything, provided that this Zarkis does not suspect and that he doesn't ask too much!" Recalling a certain expression as he looked at her which was not strictly business, she shivered. However, she wrote to the Levantine that she would see him again.

The very same day a call over the telephone urged her to call at his bank, one of those cages of reinforced concrete, mahogany and leather, in the new Boulevard Haussmann. Beatrice went as mechanically as if she were in a nightmare. Paris

was melting in the August sun but Beatrice was cold. Her Voisin—recently she had been using her cars a great deal, perhaps as an unconscious reassurance of the power of her wealth—left her at the indicated address. This was the first time she had made the journey, for journey it surely was. Vienna or Milan? Before these new halls, she felt herself outside of France. The Banque Internationale Hôtelière annoyed her, with its decorations like a casino, its parquet like a dance-hall, its counter like a bar, and, roundabout, empty cash-boxes, silence and death. When Beatrice entered, the apprentice banker was in a combination reception-room, lobby and antechamber adorned with Corinthian columns, in conference with five colleagues with heads like black rams, who emphasized their words with optic telegraphy. At the sound of Beatrice's footsteps, the dark heads disappeared as if by magic. Marino Zarkis came to meet her and, bowing ceremoniously, led her to his office.

It was a low room with padded doors—they had foreseen that there might occasionally be outcries

to stifle—and furniture constructed to give the impression of heaviness. Zarkis pushed a large armchair toward Beatrice, but she sat down on a tabouret and crossed her long legs in a stoical effort to remain calm.

"Well, Monsieur Zarkis?"

He drew down the cuffs of his silk shirt, gave Beatrice a glance that belied his caressing smile, then began to talk, speaking very slowly:

"I insisted that you come here, Madame, in order to show you——"

She did not care about being taken for a dupe, so she cut in dryly:

"That your establishment is expensive."

"Yes," he said, his voice hard, spreading his hands on the new blotting pad; "also I have given my directors reason to hope that the Princess Doriani would advance us five hundred thousand francs."

So the man was stopping in the territory of money! An unhoped-for relief. She drew out her check-book, and while she wrote Zarkis sat with his eyes on his desk, seeming to try to read his

future in its dark shining wood. He took the check. His eyes, as they rested on the figures, held an ugly gleam.

"And this waiver of suit, Monsieur Zarkis?"

An odious perfume swam in the air. The man bent over a portfolio; then a typewritten sheet was pushed before Beatrice. She read it, all her blood suddenly in her face. It was the paper which would save Franqueville, but it still lacked the signature of Marino Zarkis.

"Business is business, Princess. Now it depends on you whether I take this paper from its drawer. Yesterday I stated my conditions; they have not changed."

The dice were thrown; it was for Beatrice to pick them up.

"Can you lunch with me day after to-morrow, Monsieur Zarkis, with several people who will be useful to you?"

He consulted a small note-book.

"The invitation will be for at least eight?"

She disdained an answer.

"Are you free?"

He nodded with that enigmatic smile which must have made his fortune.

"It is understood then," she said.

Pushing back the paper, still without value, she rose and, walking like a queen, left the room, surprised not to fall in her steps.

At home she found a letter postmarked Oran. Old Masseret had seen Franqueville in a state of cold desperation which made him fear the worst, considering Franqueville's suppressed nature. His father, the aged Cévennes preacher, pursued by Zarkis, had just suffered a stroke.

"If he dies," Franqueville had said, "it is I who have killed him. There will always be blood on me, blood and treason. If I didn't believe in God, the earth would have had my carcass long ago." And good Masseret, quoting these words, added: "If you can do something for him, Princess, act quickly; he will not always believe in God."

It was in the state of mind created by Masseret's letter that Beatrice gave the luncheon which allowed Zarkis, the former innkeeper of Cyprus, to cut a figure in Parisian society. She entertained her

guests in her Dutch dining-room, a veritable museum chamber, famous for its heavy silver and royal lace. Beatrice had been able to capture Bossel-Manneville between two steeplechases, and to his amazement had begged him humbly to show himself agreeable to his neighbor, the banker Zarkis. The young man, delighted with a chance to please Beatrice so easily, immediately took Zarkis under his protection. The race tracks had accustomed him long ago to people of this class. But what interest, he wondered, could Beatrice have in the fellow? The other guests, the Norfelds, the Countess of Mussy, a childhood friend of Beatrice, and Admiral Prébac, a high officer of the navy, cast guarded glances which were not tender at this brown man so ornately tailored. In this same setting they had seen so many illustrious people, naturally at home, that this former croupier, dressed by Crieg and placed there like an example of bad taste, intrigued them more than he shocked them. For these sophisticated people whose lives revolved monotonously in an eddy of futility Zarkis, hard as a rock, had something

definite about him, something arresting and mysterious, which made him more significant than the gleam of his shoes or the two diamonds on his finger.

But Marino Zarkis, sure of himself, was not disturbed by the uneasiness he caused. A few tips from the bourse skilfully dropped, and all their sympathies would be with him. He was sure of it. All these rich idlers lived only in the hope of gain: he knew that also, so he ate without worry and with the hearty appetite of a common man, which disgusted Countess Norfeld, the Countess L. O. N., whose own appetite could be appeased by the meat of diplomatic discussion. They talked carelessly of many things which interested no one: provincial dishes, politics, stables, education; about the reckless bathers at Dinard who had suffered accidents or had disappeared. Thereupon Zarkis pushed back his plate and, without any one's understanding why, began to smile at his hostess.

"Disappearances," he said, "are not always accidental."

Beatrice felt the man's look fastened on her.

She wanted to throw down her napkin and escape, but she could not move; Zarkis' words nailed her to her chair. Her friend, Claire, who knew her very well, was anxious, and to put a stop to the torture, arose from the table.

Coffee was served in a salon. vast and boresome, where Beatrice never entertained, but which she had chosen to-day because in it any intimacy was impossible. There, as everywhere, Zarkis seemed to be at ease. He planted his big cigar near the liqueurs, and Bossel-Manneville who, during luncheon had got him interested in a horse, now in turn led all the guests to his new client with the exception of Claire de Mussy who was busy serving coffee and solicitously looking out for Beatrice.

However, with unhoped-for tact, the banker was the first to take leave. Behind his back Countess Norfeld, accustomed to Locarnian bounders useful to financial transactions, announced that she had invited Zarkis to her "day." Beatrice hadn't the strength to thank her. She considered bitterly the other guests lying in wait on the stairway to ex-

change gossip. She realized what they would say. All these good friends would leave with the certainty that she had consented to patronize the unspeakable financier because the affairs of the Mediterranean Company were in a bad way. This was the least vile supposition. She suspected another, relevant to her reputation as an insatiable Venus, but she hoped that people in spite of their cruelty would spare her that shame.

IV

FROM this time on a single obsession ruled Beatrice: to obtain the signature for which Zarkis continued to bargain with diabolical perversity. In the little theaters, the sports clubs or other places still open in spite of the season, she paraded this swarthy gentleman, the only one who could save her beloved and give him back to her. She threw in his way everything that would flatter his snobbishness. But he had long teeth. Still polite, but familiar and insistent, he was not yet ready to pay the bill. In vain Beatrice compromised herself in public, braving arched eyebrows and enduring frightful humiliations which threw her, once she was home again, upon her bed with her teeth clenched and her nails dug into her palms.

She wondered sometimes if she could carry on to the end. One day Zarkis demanded the honor of being asked to a big hunt at the home of some authentic nobleman. He believed that money was

still hidden in dowagers' closets between piles of emblazoned linens, or buried in the walls of the old parks falling in ruins.

Without showing that she was at the peak of her anguish and shame, Beatrice agreed. That morning she had received a letter from old Princess Angela who, feeling herself about to die, called Beatrice to her bedside. And Beatrice had answered in Christian humility that she was preparing to attempt a measure which involved her life's happiness; if God did not grant her success, she would return to Genoa without delay, willing to watch over her aunt and their dead in the Campo Santo.

By defying the opinion of her friends for several weeks, she had alienated them. She foresaw other separations. Who knew where her heart might lead her? In the course of her dreadful evenings in Zarkis' company she had encountered indignant eyes without lowering her own. In the opinion of people of her class who chose their partners in love as at bridge, a degrading passion was pushing her lower and lower. She, far from hiding herself,

was proud of exposing her wounds. Her fortune, her noble station, could serve only one end: to relieve the man she loved, to find him again, in whatever place or whatever situation he might be on earth. What human force could prevent her? She paid no heed to the opinion of the inquisitive judge, Delmas, director of the company, who was provoked by malicious echoes from the yellow press, or to the deprecatory remarks of old Serres in despair at seeing her ruin herself.

She determined to attempt a supreme measure to satisfy Zarkis' utmost caprice. If she failed, she could do nothing more, as she had told old Princess Angela, but wait for her place among the dead in Genoa's Campo Santo.

She suggested to her tormentor that she organize a week's hunting on one of her estates, at the château of Chambly in Sologne, an estate where game was plentiful. But Zarkis refused. To be presented by Beatrice would advance him no further; he needed another roof. Beatrice searched vainly for some one who would consent to receive this man in the intimacy required by seven days in

the country. After two false starts she thought of a friend of her father, the old Marquis de Naville who adored her because she had, so he said, the most beautiful back he had ever seen. He was an original, and his pride was so great that he considered himself privileged to do anything. He was a republican and a deputy: two faults which separated him from his friends in the Jockey Club of which he was almost the dean. This eased the way for many of them to make clandestine requests for governmental favors. He laughed about it. His stomach and his fortune being equally sound, he was not sensitive. His pace of life even after the war, was famous; he loved women and counted himself fortunate in doing a favor for Beatrice whom he considered an exceptional person, like himself.

He came to meet her at the station and bent over her hands as if to breathe in the fragrance of two beautiful roses on their stems. He paid not the least attention to her undesirable companion with his flashy new luggage.

The week rolled by like a dream. With know-

ing tact, Zarkis avoided any ridiculous display, making up for his dark skin and his accent by politeness, humility and a desire to approve everything. Beatrice watched his strategy, not understanding his success at all.

However, the thing was logical. Zarkis was as well acquainted with hunting stories as the others; he shot without tattooing the hindquarters of his neighbors or humiliating them with his prowess. He knew how to read the mass, to give for the poor, and in the deadly conclaves of the drawing-room he did not avoid the long-haired wives who sat in boredom between old Mademoiselle de Naville and her pastor. In this primitive setting shorn of all pomp, he found himself more at ease than Beatrice, who was always wearied to death there. With these dowdy provincial women he had known how to create a new atmosphere which gave them the illusion of their long lost youth or of a budding femininity. He pleased the women; he was endured by the men, even by old Naville who came immediately to the point and asked him for tips on the market.

The seventh day, on the evening before their departure, all the hunters had retired to their rooms and their night-shirts. Beatrice was considering a means of obtaining the promised waiver and was examining a revolver. At the end of her patience, she would meet the menace armed.

It was at this moment that some one knocked. Before she could answer and wrap her negligée about her, Zarkis closed the door behind him. Each heard the other breathing. Then the intruder said in a dull heavy voice:

"I didn't want to cause you a last night of fever, Princess. Here is the freedom of Monsieur Franqueville."

He was smiling. He fixed her with that look that Beatrice had already seen once. His brown fingers clasped a paper. Dead leaves were whirling against the window-panes. Then Zarkis spoke without taking his eyes from the draperies which poorly concealed the incomparable lines of limb and bust:

"Ah, Venus, I have found you again!"

He took a slow step forward. She recoiled,

suddenly pale. Then he was upon her. Catching a chair which she had almost overturned he muttered in her face:

"I have traveled far since Cyprus, and you too!"

She knew what was coming, knew that this man would exact his ultimate extortion, and her strength began to fail her.

"My brother is dead because of that body of which you are so proud. You must give me your body! You must atone!"

She did not defend herself. She saw the coveted paper in Zarkis' hand. If she called, she would create a scandal and all would be finished for ever. She felt the hot fingers against her robe, closed her eyes and waited with slow tears creeping down her cheeks.

Outside it thundered; a cyclone breath bent the great trees. What cataclysm was engulfing her, herself and her life? And as the window suddenly blew open, she did not even stir. The wind lashed her warm skin, the flying curtains overturned a lamp. Then Beatrice raised her eyelids; Zarkis had drawn back. He was still gazing at her and

that was all. For an instant their eyes met. The man smiled ruefully and threw the paper on the floor.

"Forgive me," he said, "I am not so low as you think."

He disappeared. She sprang to the door, pushed the bolt and picked up the paper which held Franqueville's destiny and hers. Then she unfolded the sheet. The signature was there at last.

She left at dawn and found at home a telegram: "Following father's death Franqueville enlisted under name Frank, 1st Foreign Regiment, Sidi-Bel-Abbès. Respectful regards. Masseret."

V

Sidi-Bel-Abbès, the city of the Legion.

Leaving the station, Beatrice, sustained till then by the excitement of a hurried trip and the frantic desire to arrive, felt herself weakening. She was expecting—souvenir of engravings of 1830—to find an ocean of tents gray as the desert sand, gangs of soldiers laboring and building, stacking their arms, piling up sacks of grain or cooking sheep impaled on branches.

She had imagined a camp, fierce and full of astounding color. Under her eyes, Bel-Abbès, peacefully stretching out its sidewalks and roofs, slept the white sleep of all the Algerian prefectures. A victoria, dating from heroic times, patched up with string but provided with a white umbrella, advanced, summoned by an Arab loaded with the travelers' bags. Beatrice got in and was driven through the magnificent and mournful suburbs where the vast preserves of the rich grain

merchants crushed the little gardens of the Spanish truck farmers. Dust, flies, languor.

In the heart of the city the low white houses cruelly reflected the heat. On the burning sidewalks farmers, officials in colonial helmets, clerks and laborers in the little cafés and before the zinc of the bars, seemed the masters of the streets, for the call to evening mess had not yet sounded in the barracks of the *légionnaires*. They seemed to live without feeling oppressed by the proximity of these volunteers from all corners of the earth, clothed in fustian like monks, and like monks, isolated from everything, seeking, in danger, redemption and forgetfulness.

Private Frank was now a part of this dark monastery of despair. Beatrice had learned en route that the boards of exemption through powerful intervention—and who could obtain that better than she?—sometimes granted honorable discharge. She would get him out or establish herself in one of those poor low houses before which her carriage passed, to watch over the man she loved, to live his wretched life and to follow him into deadly

climates and peril of death, like the black wife of the *tirailleur*, humble and faithful to the end.

Groaning through all its poor frame, the victoria stopped. The carriage was before the porch of the Palm Hotel, besieged by the sun and cluttered with sample cases. After a strategic march between the high black boxes Beatrice discovered the office on the second floor. In a glass cage, an observation post which turned its large faceted eyes on new arrivals, the proprietors lay in wait: a florid man with flabby jowls and his daughter who, with the same finger, was sorting dirty bills and the fruit in the dishes. It did not take them long to appraise the traveler; their eyes met, satisfied. They understood each other; a woman rich and elegant—her bearing and her luggage affirmed it—does not come from Paris to trade in grain at the Bel-Abbès market, the busiest in the department of Oran. A *légionnaire's* romance. The traveler suggested tragedy: mistress, daughter or wife of one of these chaps in khaki close at hand there behind the high gates crowned with the legend: *Premier Régiment Étranger*. They were blasé at Sidi-Bel-Abbès

about these adventuresses. But such ladies always paid well. . . .

For the proprietor, who asked her how long she expected to stay, Beatrice had no ready answer. Suspecting a long-drawn-out affair, he had her luggage taken to the most expensive room in the hotel, designated the "Room for Royalty."

And why not? Had not mysterious lords and even higher than they come there before the war, sent by various courts of Europe on special missions, sometimes to depart with the renunciation to a throne locked in their emblazoned portfolios, or perhaps the permission to transport the body of a humble *légionnaire,* identified simply by a number, on a foreign ship fluttering an imperial ensign. At each of these visits, fantastic legends had run riot. But the great ones of the earth know how to keep their secrets, and the truth with them is always at the bottom of the well.

Happily, there were more loquacious guests. Democratic hearts open easily, and one quickly learned their stories. How many confidences had been told the proprietor of the Room for Royalty!

If the laughter of the commercial travelers had not rolled unceasingly from the stairs to the dining-room, the hotel would have been too gloomy to live in. The Room for Royalty tried to justify its pompous title by three tall windows looking out on the street. As for the rest, it abandoned the effort; the furnishings, torn carpet, dubious washstand and candelabra of false bronze were the same as in the adjoining rooms.

As soon as the door closed, Beatrice threw herself on a *chaise-longue* of threadbare plush, whose contact made her shiver. What was happening to her? She trembled all over and the back of her neck felt like lead. Suddenly she no longer had the strength to chase away the flies which were seeking her moist skin and the sugar in her face powder.

However, she decided to go immediately to the regiment. She could not rest until she had delivered to Franqueville the release from the Greek which would make his enlistment in the Legion unnecessary. But how could she find him? She was neither the sister nor the wife of the *légionnaire;*

she had no way of entering the barracks or even of getting by the guard. If she wrote to him, he might tear up the letter without reading it. Nevertheless, she could not wait in this uncertainty; she must see Franqueville at any cost and she viewed with terror her increasing weakness. In the mirror, she saw herself so wan that she rose abruptly to remedy the pallor with a touch of rouge. Then everything about her reeled; she crumpled down on the dirty carpet.

It was in this position that a porter found her. He was a half-breed, his kinky hair loosely controlled by the string net over his head. Barefooted, he stole into each room, a cigarette stub hanging from his lips. He aroused the proprietor as he might have sounded the fire-alarm. The very thought of a death in their place throw all these worthies into panic. Carefully the stranger was carried to the bed, and a doctor sent for.

When Beatrice opened her eyes a big blond man with kind eyes behind his gold-rimmed spectacles was holding her hand. He introduced himself as Doctor Walsh.

"Give me anything you like, Doctor," she said, "but I must go out."

Walsh, suddenly stiff with professional authority, frowned.

"I must go out," she repeated.

The habit of command rang in her voice. The physician bent with curiosity over this delicate woman, whose allure was so irresistible that here, half dead in this poor room, she still was the personification of beauty and of the sad mystery of love.

His eyes filled with pity. Lightly laying his shaggy head to her breast, then to the long sloping back, he sought valiantly to find reason to reassure his patient, but in vain.

"I am sorry to oppose you, Madame, but I am responsible for you, and I'm obliged to keep you here for a week, at least."

The doctor peremptorily dismissed the staring proprietor, who had been lingering at the door.

"A week passes quickly; life, here, doesn't move fast. Yes, go on and cry, that's a good relaxation."

She raised herself and encountered the kind understanding eyes. She could not talk, but she felt near her some one to whom she might tell her story, some one who had perhaps guessed it already. She trusted him; she would obey him.

Doctor Walsh sent her a quiet and attentive nurse. Beatrice was resigned. She was forced to endure empty hours relieved only by the song of the flies; burning nights between coarse sheets; the torment of an obsession.

The doctor came twice a day "as a neighbor," he said, "not as a doctor." The excellent man knew that this solitary woman was suffering above all from sickness of the heart and that to recover she needed to feel the sympathy of another soul. The fifth day he announced:

"You may get up to-day, walk to your window and stay there long enough to see the monkey cage. Then you must go back to bed. To-morrow——"

She interrupted him:

"Are there monkeys at Bel-Abbès?

He began to laugh.

"The *légionnaire* is an animal who considers it

his duty to be disrespectful. The monkey cage is a pavilion, built by the First Regiment, where the officers eat and listen to music. The monkey, that is the officer, the master."

A shadow darkened the lovely eyes of Beatrice.

"Now don't think because of what I've said that the *légionnaires* are savages or criminals. If criminals enter the Legion, they don't stay long. As soon as they are discovered, they are sent back to the courts of their countries where they are tried according to law. It is like the legend of deserters. It's true there are some deserters here, but it's more often deserters from life who have refused to accept it calmly, like us, with its cowardice and platitudes. Their chief crime is to have kept, at at the age of manhood, the heroic taste for risk and adventure."

His sincere and honest eyes met hers.

"You see, it's my right to defend them because I was born among them. My father was a German soldier who was naturalized when he left the Legion and became a teacher in the city college. I am proud of it. He made me love his comrades

from boyhood. I grew up among them; they awakened my intelligence, taught me, gave me a taste for Latin and a passion for music; I owe these savages everything. But I am boring you with my stories."

She made an emphatic gesture of denial, and the doctor understood that he had guessed right and that he was telling her what she wanted to know.

"At my house," continued Walsh, "if you'll do me the honor of coming there, I can show you many things which will interest you, I think: magnificent book bindings executed by our *légionnaires,* the complete equipment of my radio cabinet made by them, programs of beautiful concerts which they give at my house. And if you would like to know some of them . . ."

"Doctor, would you?"

Then Doctor Walsh would once more be her savior; he would spare her the humiliation of being repulsed by a guard, shunted from one office to another. She hesitated no longer, but told him everything. She was beginning to believe her ill-

ness a blessing. The doctor, listening to her, had the gentleness and serenity of a confessor.

"The *légionnaires* are drilling at the camp at Bedeau," he said, "but Private Frank, being a new soldier, should be here. I shall find out about his habits and you shall see him soon; count on me."

The next day, the doctor came back, and Beatrice was up, her strength returned as by magic.

"Private Frank," he announced, "has the reputation of being taciturn; he rarely goes out with his comrades. Usually he goes alone, about nine o'clock, to the Place du Marché where he's a patron of one of the Spanish bars."

He hesitated an instant, then continued:

"If you will wait a few days, I shall certainly manage to bring him to my house."

She replied simply: "Wait . . ."

There was a silence.

"You must let me out," she declared; "you see I am strong now, Doctor."

He smiled a bit anxiously. When he took leave of her half an hour later his last words were:

"I hope that in the future, if you need me, you will consider me as a friend . . ."

She stayed all the rest of the day at the window, watching the famous monkey cage which topped like a great straw hat the corner of the African garden. In the evening, pale as if drained by anguish, she escaped from the hotel. Outside, the heat and the street noises assailed her. She defied them with all her will and directed her steps toward the Boulevard de la République where, behind a high gate, three heavy buildings surrounded a bare court. The Legion barracks. It was there he lived, there he had imprisoned his hope and his pride; his love as well. . . . Suddenly timid, she dared not approach this somber refuge of adventure and despair. Moreover, what would she have inquired of the sentinel before the gate? Captain Franqueville no longer existed and Private Frank had no connection with the world.

She went back as she had come, along the sidewalk crowded with soldiers in khaki, *légionnaires*. Youths vigorously erect; old men with gray heads, *briscards*, their breasts gleaming with medals;

peasants with countrified manners; aristocrats clad in fustian, they passed Beatrice without a questioning glance; indifferent, even disdainful, in their uniform without chevrons, men united by discipline and misfortune. Yet it was in vain that these soldiers all wore the same garb. Under their long cloaks and their *képis* the class and race were revealed by his manners. They walked alone or in couples; none mixed with the civilians.

The doctor had said, "At nine o'clock in a bar in the Place du Marché." It was now only eight. Beatrice stopped at a tobacco store to choose some post-cards, then at a candy store where soldiers were making purchases and where she heard only German spoken to the Spanish shopkeepers. He was not there. Almost exhausted—it was her first walk since her illness—she sat down on a bench in the Place Carnot. Suddenly she saw a stork on the edge of the roof on the Town Hall and this happy omen renewed her strength. A quarter to nine; soon he would come! She got up and crossed the street. The Place du Marché seemed deserted. Bare legs, rags, huddled together on piles of old

sacks. The saloons were the only bright spots in this gloom. From their doors at intervals escaped jests or insults which cut the night like knives. An atmosphere of tension. But now Beatrice felt sure of finding Franqueville. She walked on toward the saloons. In the first two she saw nothing but the gleaming horns of the phonographs. But the third stopped her, held her fast to the ground. Inside the cabaret with its dirty walls, three *spahis* and two *légionnaires* were watching a fat Jew with hanging flesh, learning the Charleston from a pretty little voluptuous Moorish girl. Leaning against the counter, lost in some queer reverie, a hunchback was strumming a guitar, and far at the back, alone at a table, sat a man, a man who was drinking, his elbows on the table, his eyes fixed. How many glasses had he already emptied? But even in his private's uniform he was still a chief; his short clipped hair accentuated the masculine vigor of his face. He seemed to be lost in a dream, sipping his drink slowly, seeing no one. Beatrice looked at him, bewildered. *Mon Dieu,* was it possible? This fierce soul had resisted all disasters, all ca-

tastrophes save her absence—he had succumbed only to the pain which had come from her. He was using alcohol as an anodyne. To forget her, only for that, this man was there with all his pride gone, his eyes full of savage torment. What greater proof could she ask of his love? Her hands flew to her breast, pressed hard to stifle the wild beating of her heart. Never had she adored Franqueville as at this minute, seeing him fallen so low. He loved her, what else mattered? What mattered the gesture he would make when he saw her? Was he not the absolute master of her fate?

The Jew and the Moorish girl, satisfied with their collection, went out with the *spahis*, melting into the darkness. The two *légionnaires* had taken places at Frank's table, but he did not look up. How long would they stay? Would they leave together? Would she ever find another such opportunity? She held in her hand the paper from Marino Zarkis, in an envelope addressed to Private Frank, First Foreign Regiment. She had prepared it at the hotel the day when she had thought she might die. If she entered and gave it to him her-

self, all this would be finished. But Franqueville's eyes frightened her. She shook one of the sleeping beggars.

"Take this paper to that soldier. If he asks who gave it to you, tell him I am here, but don't say anything unless he asks you. Here's fifty francs."

The beggar entered quietly, slipping along in his bare feet, and placed the envelope before Franqueville. As no one asked him anything, he waited several minutes in a corner, humble in his rags. The two *légionnaires* at Franqueville's table got up. Was this the time? Had they sensed that Franqueville should be left alone, or were they fleeing from the drama announced by the envelope on the table? They had enough dramas in their own lives! Without a word to their companion they left the place and passed before Beatrice. She was seized by a desire to stop them, to ask their help, but a remnant of pride prevented her. They vanished down the street.

Franqueville did not appear even to have seen the letter. It was only when his hand seized his glass that his gaze wandered toward the white spot

of paper, but he looked away immediately and began to drink, his eyes devoid of thought. Was all curiosity in him dead, or did he recognize her handwriting? Now, in the presence of this unknown Franqueville, Beatrice was terribly afraid, with the fear of seeing the man she loved suddenly stricken with madness. The bartender, an enormous yellow bull in a flowered shirt, announced in a raucous voice that he was going to shut up the shop. He too did not feel reassured by that letter brought in so mysteriously. There was a story behind it, and with the *légionnaires* stories always end badly. Just the evening before, the Spaniard had been called before the Colonel of the Legion, a harsh man who did not go in for jokes, about a brawl in his place. That affair was enough for him! The hunchback slipped outdoors, forming with his guitar a monstrous double shadow in the night. Then Franqueville got up like an automaton, erect as ever—even in his drunkenness a remnant of dignity survived—and threw some coins on the table without counting them. He was leaving without opening the letter, without even

picking it up! Beatrice leaned weakly against the wall. So her long weeks of humiliation and torture, that heavy hand of Marino Zarkis on her life and on her flesh, all that had been useless. . . .

"Say, there, haven't you forgotten something?"

The bartender was handing the letter to him. Franqueville took the paper which held his fate, and turned it over and over in his hands as if the sight of it had at last awakened something within him, had stirred some memory in the mists of his brain now inflamed with alcohol. He opened the envelope; read the paper once, twice, and read it again. His face had hardened; he still had that vacant look in his eyes which terrified Beatrice. Then he drew out his *briquet.* The precious paper flamed and flew behind him in consumed flakes, frail as black insects. He stamped on the cinders and it seemed to Beatrice that his heel was crushing her heart.

Franqueville had turned toward the street, but just as his tall silhouette darkened the luminous rectangle of the door, he stopped. He had seen her. They gazed at each other with frightened

eyes. Beatrice no longer had the power to take a step toward him; it was she now who seemed at the end of her strength. Her perfect body, leaning against the wall, still was singularly graceful, but she was no longer conscious of her beauty. She was no longer conscious of anything. He was gazing at her incredulously, his eyes full of bitterness, just as he had looked at the letter. He believed himself going mad. But, no, there was really a human creature there.

Abruptly he moved toward Beatrice. She shivered. He was going to kill her. She hoped so; she wanted to die . . . she closed her eyes, waiting for him to strike. . . .

When she opened them again she saw his face close above hers. Along his brown cheek ran a tear, a slow tear such as only a man sheds when his emotion rises from the depths of his being. She threw herself upon his breast; his arms folded her close and she began to cry in her turn. Then without other vows than the wild beating of heart speaking to heart, they went off into the night.

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